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THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
AND THE CONSULTATION ON CHURCH UNION

by

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## PREFACE

This thesis attempts to examine some of the Episcopal Church's interest in ecumenical affairs. In recent years, our relationships with Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox have been ever-broadening, but because of the limited scope of this thesis, all these relationships could not be examined. Rather, I have chosen to examine the role of the Episcopal Church in its relationship with the Consultation on Church Union which at the present time, represents an opportunity to join with our Christian brothers in creating a United Church "truly catholic, truly reformed, and truly evangelical." It is not within the scope of this thesis to present all the reasons why church union is necessary. Suffice it to say that I favor church union - not hasty thoughtless union, but union which is wise and at the same time withstands the questions and doubts of all parts of the Church. I believe that the Consultation on Church Union represents just such a beginning.

My thanks to the Rev. William J. Wolf who has made many helpful comments both in the preparation of this manuscript and to the manuscript itself; to my wife and Keith R. J. Horner for their many helpful suggestions to the manuscript. My special thanks to Miss Vivian Warr who has so graciously given of her time to type this manuscript.

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## CHAPTER ONE

The age in which we are living is an exciting one. It is the age of pioneer space exploration, new and greater advances in medicine and new prosperity. It is also the ecumenical age. As never before, men of various denominations are holding serious discussions with each other. It is an age when the Roman Catholics are talking with the Orthodox and the Protestants, and when the Protestants are talking with the Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and other Protestants. The scandal of separated churches seems to be felt in the 1960's as never before and, more than ever, tangible action is being taken to develop corrective measures. Twenty-five years ago the word "ecumenical" was seldom used or understood except by a few, whereas today most Christians frequently make use of this word. Secular periodicals such as Time and Newsweek almost weekly report ecumenical activities that are occurring between various denominations. The Protestant Episcopal Church is among these denominations which are actively participating in ecumenical discussions on many levels. It is actively in conversation with the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and other Protestant Churches. Intercommunion exists between the Protestant Episcopal Church (and the Anglican Communion) and the Old Catholic Churches of Europe; the Polish National Catholic Church of America; the Philippine National Church; the Spanish Reformed Church; the Lusitanian (Portuguese) Church and partial intercommunion with the Church of South India.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Day, "What About Church Union," The Episcopalian, November 1965, Vol. 130, No. 11, p. 8.

(3)

Episcopal Church is involved in discussion with five other Churches (The Disciples of Christ; The Evangelical United Brethren Church; The Methodist Church; The United Church of Christ; and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.) with the idea of creating a United Church that would be "truly Catholic, truly Reformed, and truly Evangelical."<sup>2</sup> This discussion, known as the Consultation on Church Union, formally began in 1962 and is now at a point in its discussions where it is ready to draft a plan of union.

The Consultation on Church Union will be discussed in detail in the bulk of this thesis. First, however, it is appropriate and necessary that we go back in time to examine the Protestant Episcopal Church's involvement in ecumenical affairs, with special reference to those individuals who made the great contributions that enabled us to reach the present stage of development.

As in the 1960's, the men of the 19th century had a deep interest in creating a united church. This was consistent with the spirit of nationalism that prevailed throughout the United States. One of the greatest of the contributors to church unity at that time was William Reed Huntington. He was, as we shall see, a product of his age and yet a man of far vision.

Men in the middle of the 19th century were thinking that solutions to almost any problem could be found. The United States was firmly established. Skepticism over whether or not a democracy would survive had all but been erased. Men

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<sup>2</sup>Eugene C. Blake, from a sermon entitled "A Proposal Toward the Reunion of Christ's Church," preached at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco on December 4, 1960.

were proud of their country and its achievements. It was out of such a feeling that religious men began to think about a united church instead of many scattered sects and denominations. People and states of various backgrounds, experiences and views had bonded together to form a united government. The United States had survived and had, in fact, grown in strength and stature. These men of religious conviction felt that if a government could unite, then why could not the church? These men had numerous sources of inspiration from scripture and the evidence of the success of the United States as a proven thing. They felt that the time was ripe for a united church.

One of the first men in this country to propose church unity was William A. Muhlenburg who published in 1836 his anonymous book, Hints on Catholic Union. Muhlenburg argued for catholic union because "the Church divided is comparatively weak."<sup>3</sup> In his book, Muhlenburg called for a union in doctrine because he felt that there was "sufficient agreement in the leading articles of belief, to make them substantially one."<sup>4</sup> Muhlenburg also called for a union in the ministry and in worship and viewed the possibility that the accomplishment of such a union might come through the Protestant Episcopal Church. He cautioned, however, that the Episcopal Church "had principles they consider unalterable,"<sup>5</sup> namely: 1) Scriptures alone

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<sup>3</sup> William A. Muhlenburg, Hints on Catholic Union (Protestant Episcopal Press, New York: 1836), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

are the rule of faith; 2) An adherence to Episcopacy as the channel of the ministry; and 3) Precomposed prayers in some established liturgy.<sup>6</sup> Muhlenburg was well aware of the fact that the Episcopacy as the channel of the ministry would be a roadblock to other denominations joining with the Episcopal Church and so he carefully explained why he thought that it was important. He concluded by stating:

In order to union, in the essential point of a mutual recognition of their respective ministers by Protestant Churches, it has been proposed, in these hints, that that form of ordination should be adopted which is universally acknowledged to be valid, and not repugnant to the word of God. Such is episcopal ordination.<sup>7</sup>

Other men in this same period were also beginning to speak out on the necessity of a united church. In 1838, an Englishman by the name of The Rev. John Harris published an American Edition on the subject entitled: Union; or The Divided Church Made One. In his book, Harris advocated the necessity "to exhibit the Scripture doctrine of the Unity of the Church."<sup>8</sup> Harris' main interests in the matter were to examine why the church was divided and to explain union was desirable. In his final chapter, the author stated that he felt "souls (are) ruined . . . through its (the Church's) divisions."<sup>9</sup> Although Harris' influence on William Reed Huntington and

<sup>6</sup> William A. Muhlenburg, Hints on Catholic Union (Protestant Episcopal Press, New York: 1836), pp. 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 41

<sup>8</sup> John Harris, Union; or The Divided Church Made One (Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, Boston: 1838), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

other men interested in church unity is not really known, his book, nevertheless, cried out eloquently for the union of Christianity and was one more voice in the growing number of voices advocating union in this country.

Another Episcopalian clergyman, Thomas H. Vail, in 1841 published his book The Comprehensive Church. Vail's book was widely read, and as the author wrote to Bishop Eastman a year later: "It has already led some to our fold."<sup>10</sup> Vail's contributions to William Reed Huntington's proposals on church unity deserved greater credit than earlier scholars gave to him. He proposed that the Episcopal Church was "a basis of Christian and ecclesiastical unity to all the Christian people in our country."<sup>11</sup> This, as we shall see later, was the same argument that both Edward Washburn and Dr. Huntington were to use later in the century. On the basis of this assumption, Vail carefully examined the Protestant Episcopal Church. This examination included:

- 1) ". . . the regular connexion of the Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church . . . and through them of the Church itself, which acknowledges them, with the Church of England whose unity has been unbroken from the primitive and apostolical age."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Thomas H. Vail, letter attached inside the front cover of the Episcopal Theological School Library's copy of his book: The Comprehensive Church (H. Huntington, Jr., Hartford, Conn.: 1841)

<sup>11</sup> Thomas H. Vail, The Comprehensive Church (H. Huntington, Jr., Hartford, Conn.: 1841), p. 62

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 72

2) "The sacraments of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the language of its catechism, are 'two only, as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.' "<sup>13</sup>

3) The creeds of the Protestant Episcopal Church: The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.<sup>14</sup>

4) "The doctrine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, as taught in its various formularies and standards, is strictly scriptural and practical rather than philosophical and abstract . . ."<sup>15</sup>

The four characteristics (as noted above) of the Episcopal Church are but a few of the several that Vail examined in his book, but it is interesting and perhaps significant that William Reed Huntington was to later use these same four points as the basis for church unity. It took, however, the genius and new perspective of Dr. Huntington to set these down in simple direct language so that all could see and discuss the plausibility of Christian unity.

William Muhlenburg made further contributions to the area of church unity when he submitted a memorial to the General Convention of 1853. This memorial was important not only because it was the beginning of a discussion of Christian unity for all succeeding General Conventions down to the present day, but also because it brought the topic before the entire Episcopal Church.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Thomas H. Vail, The Comprehensive Church (H. Huntington, Jr., Hartford, Conn.: 1841), p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> Raymond W. Albright, "When We Talk about Unity . . .", The Episcopalian, August 1963, Vol. 128, No. 8, p. 14.

It was also during this period that one of the leading theologians in England was Frederick Denison Maurice. During his life, Maurice wrote many books and among them was his famous The Kingdom of Christ which was first published in 1838. There is little doubt that this book, among his many others, was widely read in the United States. In describing the influence of Maurice and The Kingdom of Christ, John F. Porter and William J. Wolf in their book Toward the Recovery of Unity stated that Maurice has "set forth a theology of Christian ecumenism that has yet to come into its own." <sup>17</sup>

In the fourth chapter of The Kingdom of Christ entitled "The Signs of a Spiritual Society," Maurice lists six signs that make the Church "a distinct body." <sup>18</sup> These six signs are: 1) Baptism; 2) The Creeds; 3) Forms of Worship; 4) The Eucharist; 5) The Ministry; and 6) The Scriptures. <sup>19</sup> Each of these signs of the Church is examined at length by Maurice in terms of the Quaker, Philosophical, "Romish," and Protestant traditions. It is more than likely that Dr. Huntington was familiar with these six signs of Maurice's and was, as we shall see, in all probability influenced by them.

<sup>17</sup> John F. Porter and William J. Wolf, Toward the Recovery of Unity (Seabury Press, New York: 1964), p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Frederick D. Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ (D. Appleton and Co., New York: 1838, reprinted 1843), p. 240.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 240-423.

Before we turn our attention to William Reed Huntington, we cannot overlook Edward A. Washburn's influence on Dr. Huntington and his growing concern for the unity of the Church. In 1835, Washburn was rector of St. John's Church in Hartford, Conn. when he published his book, A Catholic Work of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Like Vail, Washburn pleaded for a truly catholic church and suggested that the Episcopal Church "manifested a changeless unity expressed in the great institutions of the Sacraments, the ministry, the Holy Scriptures and the Creeds."<sup>20</sup> Washburn, however, was to see that the Episcopate was to be a difficulty in achieving church unity. In his lectures on Church History to the students at the Berkeley Divinity School between 1854 and 1863, he stated:

Anglicanism has its solid kernel of truth in demand for unity above all special Protestant confessions; it only fails because it identifies the Church with a divinely ordered Episcopate.<sup>21</sup>

It is not surprising that Washburn was to influence his friends, Phillips Brooks and William Reed Huntington to the point that they were caught up in the whole idea of church unity. Both preached sermons and delivered addresses on the subject throughout their ministries.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Raymond W. Albright, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church (The Macmillan Co., New York: 1964), p. 271.

<sup>21</sup> Edward A. Washburn, Epochs in Church History, ed., C. C. Tiffany (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York: 1883), p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Albright, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church, p. 271.

It was shortly after Washburn's important book in 1855 that William Reed Huntington began preaching sermons and delivering addresses that dealt extensively with the unity of the church. In a speech delivered before the American Bible Society on May 11, 1865, Huntington spoke of the need for church unity. In this talk, Dr. Huntington said:

Resolved: That the unity of Scriptures and the unity of the Church alike centre in the person of one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

. . . . .  
We who are gathered here are friends of a Bible whose unity has been impugned. We who are gathered here are also members of one holy catholic Church whose visible unity has been broken. <sup>23</sup>

Later, in this same speech, Huntington echoed the feeling of those in this period who called for the reunion of Christendom. He stated: "There is at present, a strong desire growing up, all over Christendom, for reunion, for visible reunion." <sup>24</sup>

It was later that same week in May 1865 that William Reed Huntington preached in Trinity Church, Boston where he spoke again on the subject of church unity. He

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<sup>23</sup>William Reed Huntington, from an unpublished manuscript entitled "The Unity of the Scripture, the Unity of the Church and the Person of Christ," a speech delivered at a meeting of the American Bible Society on May 11, 1865. Manuscript in the William Reed Huntington collection at The Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

argued for it on the basis of 1) a simple creed<sup>25</sup> 2) a varied worship<sup>26</sup> and 3) ". . . a generous polity."<sup>27</sup> He further argued:

It is idle to prate about the Church of the future, unless you can find for it some point of historical attachment to the Church of the past. Just this 'missing link' the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States supplies a Church that traces her lineage all the way back to the first century . . .<sup>28</sup>

It was in this sermon preached in 1865 that we can see the seeds of Dr. Huntington's ideas on church unity beginning to be planted and take shape. It was less than five years later that he made his four proposals for church unity that were to have a significant influence on the General Convention in 1886 and later on the Lambeth Quadrilateral adopted in 1888.

In January 1870, William Reed Huntington delivered his famous two part sermon entitled "The Church of Reconciliation"<sup>29</sup> at All Saints' Church in Worcester, Mass. Later that same year, this two part sermon was incorporated and expanded

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<sup>25</sup> William Reed Huntington from a sermon preached in Trinity Church, Boston on May 16, 1865. Originally printed at the request of the Church Union of Mass before whom it was delivered (New York, 1908). Manuscript in the William Reed Huntington collection at the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Note: This two part sermon may be found in the original in the Episcopal Theological School's collection of William Reed Huntington's sermons. Sermon numbers 244 and 245, Vol. 9.

in his book The Church Idea. Like those men who had spoken out in favor of Christian union, Dr. Huntington felt that

Two religious systems, and only two, offer to the Christian people of this country an historical basis of unity. These are respectively the Anglican and the Roman Churches.<sup>30</sup>

What separated Huntington from those who had proposed church unity before him was the fact that he stated his plan in clear precise language. This plan was broken into four areas which he felt would be acceptable for the unity of the church. By doing so, Huntington enabled other men and denominations to discuss something tangible and straightforward. Dr. Huntington simply and clearly stated:

The true Anglican position, like the City of God in the Apocalypse, may be said to lie foursquare. Honestly to accept that position is to accept -

- 1st. The Holy Scriptures as the Word of God.
- 2nd. The Primitive Creeds as the Rule of Faith.
- 3rd. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself.
- 4th. The Episcopate as the key-stone of Governmental Unity.

These four points, like the four famous fortresses of Lombardy make the Quadrilateral of pure Anglicanism. Within them the Church of Reconciliation may stand secure.<sup>31</sup>

The immediate results of William Reed Huntington's book are not exactly known, but its influence was directly felt in the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1886. As Chairman of the Committee on Christian Unity, The Rt. Rev. Abram N. Littlejohn presented his committee's report to the House of

<sup>30</sup>William R. Huntington, The Church Idea (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and New York: 1870, reprinted in 1928), p. 122.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 125-126.

Bishops on October 20, 1886. The essence of this report contained William Reed Huntington's four points as the basis for church union. The report contained the following:

As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

- 1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God.
- 2) The Nicene Creed as sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
- 3) The two Sacraments, - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and the elements ordained by Him.
- 4) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varyings needs of the nations and peoples called by God into the unity of His Church.

Furthermore . . . we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorized response to this Declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian Bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church . . . <sup>32</sup>

This report was overwhelmingly supported by both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies and was signed "by more than one thousand of the Clergy, including thirty-two Bishops." <sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Journal of the General Convention (1886), Printed for the Convention in 1887, p. 80.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

The immediate result of the adoption of the resolution on church unity by the General Convention of 1886 was to be seen at the Lambeth Conference in London, July, 1888. From the Encyclical Letter of 1888 comes the statement: "We hold ourselves in readiness to enter into brotherly conference with any of those who may desire intercommunion with us in a more or less perfect form." <sup>34</sup> The Lambeth Conference adopted a resolution that would "supply a basis on which approach may be God's blessing made toward Home Reunion." <sup>35</sup> They were as follows:

- (a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," as being the rule and ultimate standard of Faith.
- (b) The Apostles's Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
- (c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.
- (d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into unity of His Church. <sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup>Encyclical Letter of Lambeth Conference of 1888, quoted from Church Reunion Discussed on the Basis of the Lambeth Propositions of 1888 (The Church Review Co., New York: 1890) p. 14.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 18

The Committee on Home Reunion stated that it owed a debt of gratitude to the General Convention of 1886 because "the most important and practical step has been taken by our brethren of the American Church in the General Convention of 1886." <sup>37</sup>

On the basis of the four proposals for Christian union, comments from leading men of other denominations were invited by The Church Review. In the majority of the replies, most were in full agreement on the first three proposals. It was the fourth proposal (The Historic Episcopate) that created problems. There were many requests for a fuller explanation of what exactly was meant by the phrase "Historic Episcopate." Professor George R. Crooks, D.D., a Methodist, wrote: "The real difficulty will be in the fourth proposition, - the acceptance of 'Historic Episcopate,' as you are supposed to understand the meaning of that term." <sup>38</sup> The Rev. Talbot W. Chambers of the Dutch Reformed Church had much the same reaction when he wrote: "The fourth point, the 'Historic Episcopate,' is too vague to serve its purpose." <sup>39</sup>

Because other denominations reacted unfavorably to the fourth proposal, William Reed Huntington wrote several books that tried to resolve the problem and

<sup>37</sup> Encyclical Letter of Lambeth Conference of 1888, quoted from Church Reunion Discussed on the Basis of the Lambeth Propositions of 1888 (The Church Review Co., New York: 1890) p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> George R. Crooks, quoted from Church Reunion Discussed on the Basis of the Lambeth Propositions of 1888, p. 113.

<sup>39</sup> Talbot W. Chambers, quoted from the same source as Footnote Number 38.

to plead once again for the necessity of church unity. In his book, The Peace of the Church (1891), Dr. Huntington devoted several pages to what the "Historic Episcopate" meant by tracing its history and influence on the church. He further asked to hear from each denomination "What, in its deliberate judgement, is the most generous platform of union it can conscientiously offer to the rest." <sup>40</sup>

Later in 1898, Huntington, like his predecessors, argued in A National Church that if a United States could succeed despite many things that worked against it, why then couldn't a united church work? He pointed out that "there are in the United States (in 1898) one hundred and forty-three religious denominations." <sup>41</sup> (There are over two hundred and fifty religious denominations present today.) This in itself, he felt, was alarming. He notes the seriousness of the problem by offering this excellent illustration:

Were there as many competing temples of justice in an American city as there are rival temples of religion, the young man would be as quick to unlearn civil virtues as he is now disposed to throw up Christian faith.

. . . . .

A national Church would be, if nothing else, a great evidence of religion. <sup>42</sup>

Huntington, as well as other churchmen, continued to press for church unity. Again, in 1895, as in previous conventions, the subject was discussed at length by

<sup>40</sup> William R. Huntington, The Peace of the Church (C. Scribner's Sons, New York: 1891), p. 45.

<sup>41</sup> William R. Huntington, A National Church (C. Scribner's Sons, New York: 1898), p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-47.

the General Convention. Letters to other denominations were sent seeking comment on the four proposals that were adopted in 1886. The correspondence between the Commission on Christian Unity and other denominations is printed in Appendix XI of the Journal of the General Convention of 1895. Among other things, these letters show that Christian unity as such would not be an easily achieved matter. Although the majority of the letters agreed that unity was a desirable thing, considerable disagreement arose out of an interpretation of the "Historic Episcopate" and other matters relating to this. For example, the Presbyterian Committee stated: "At the same time we are not disposed to constrain others to adopt our interpretation in this matter (of Historic Episcopate)."<sup>43</sup>

The important thing to note here, however, is the fact that the way had been opened to two-way communication between the separated churches, and unity cannot ever be achieved without these preliminary steps. Without these initial steps, it is very probable that what took place between 1900 and 1960 and for that matter what is taking place today in the Consultation on Church Union might never have taken place. Although discussion of church unity had been on the tongues of men for some time before William Reed Huntington, it took his genius and force to state four guideposts simply and directly so that they were adopted by the General Convention of 1886 and later by the Lambeth Conference of 1888. These four guideposts, known as the

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<sup>43</sup> Journal of the General Convention of 1895, printed for the Convention in 1896, p. 598, quoted from a letter from the Presbyterian Committee, Joseph T. Smith, Chairman, dated May 24th, 1888.

Lambeth Quadrilateral, serve as the basis for all our discussions on church unity, including the Consultation on Church Union.

In our next chapter, we shall consider the period from 1900 to 1960 and the people whose contributions were responsible for creating the attitude and atmosphere that exists in today's ecumenical age. Special emphasis will be placed upon those events that bear directly on the Consultation on Church Union.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

Between the years 1900 and 1960, the Episcopal Church considerably expanded its interest in the field of ecumenics. While, within the scope of this paper, it would not be possible to examine carefully all phases of the Church's involvement in ecumenical affairs, several deserve mentioning. We noted in the last chapter that largely through the efforts of William Reed Huntington and his influence on the Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Episcopal Church's position concerning church union was made more explicit.

During the early years of this century, the Episcopal Church continued its informal discussions with other Protestant Churches. At each General Convention, the Joint Commission on Unity made its reports on what progress, if any, was being made in coming closer to other Protestant denominations. In the meantime, other events were beginning to take place that would broaden the Episcopal Church's involvement in ecumenical affairs. In 1910, the great World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh. Because this conference could not discuss the basic issues of Church doctrine, the Rt. Rev. Charles Henry Brent, Bishop of the Philippine Islands, introduced a resolution in the House of Bishops at the General Convention of 1910 inviting Christians from all over the world to come together to discuss just such issues at a World Conference on Faith and Order. Ultimately, a conference was held at Lausanne, Switzerland in 1927 under his very able leadership. It was partly due to Bishop Brent's leadership that the World Council of Churches came

into reality in 1948.<sup>1</sup> Through the efforts of such far-visioned men as Bishop Brent, the Episcopal Church considerably broadened its ecumenical perspective.

Because of the new awakening spirit in the first decade of this century that affected our Church and many others as well, the National Council of the Congregational Churches appointed five commissioners, under the leadership of Newmann Smyth, to discuss unity with the Episcopal Church. Newmann Smyth, a Congregational minister from New Haven, had been writing about church unity for several years and it was his firm belief that the Episcopal Church had the responsibility among all the churches to be the mediating Church in Protestantism. It was with this attitude that the five commissioners approached the General Convention of 1910. For eight years the Episcopal Church took no definite action and in 1918 the Commission appealed directly to the Presiding Bishop with the only result that a report pointing out the major differences between the two Churches was made.

Undaunted, the Congregational Commissioners pressed the Episcopal Church until a Joint Commission was formed in 1919 to work out a Proposed Concordat. The Proposed Concordat was presented to the General Convention of 1922 with the valuable section on "Proposals for an Approach Toward Unity." The Joint Commission realized that organic union was still in the distant future but proposed that

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<sup>1</sup> "20 Questions about the Episcopal Church and the Ecumenical Movement" (National Council, New York, no date) pp. 4-5 and The Oxford Dictionary of the Church, ed., F. L. Cross (Oxford University Press, New York: 1961), p. 195.

as a beginning towards union, intercommunion be established between the two Churches. According to the Proposed Concordat, intercommunion was to be established by providing for supplementary orders for Congregational ministers. By receiving Episcopal ordination, the Congregational ministers could continue to be members of the Congregational Church. When properly interpreted, this meant that those Congregational parishes which accepted Episcopal ordination would become, in fact, Episcopal parishes. Of course, such a development was completely unacceptable to the Congregational Commissioners, and in 1923 at the National Council of Congregational Churches, the Proposed Concordat was tabled, thus closing the discussion to any further debate.<sup>2</sup>

At the General Convention of 1928, Bishop Brent reported on the Conference on Faith and Order held the year before. As a result of the enthusiasm generated by this report, his proposal that the Episcopalians join with the Methodists and Presbyterians in discussing Christian morality was quickly passed. It was hoped that out of such discussions a way could eventually be found to achieve unity between the three Churches. The Methodists, however, were too involved with the problem of unity within their own Church to become involved with any further discussions of unity outside their communion. It was logical, therefore, to pursue further discussions with the Presbyterian Church which seemed fairly receptive to the idea.

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<sup>2</sup>Raymond W. Albright, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church (Macmillan Co., New York: 1964), pp. 352-353.

In 1936 Bishop Edward Parsons, a member of the Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity and once himself a Presbyterian, prepared a Proposed Concordat that reasoned for organic union between the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The basis of this proposal was: "A mutual recognition of ministries, full intercommunion, and an interchange of ministries after supplemental ordination by a bishop or authorization by a prebstry."<sup>3</sup>

A year later, in 1937, the General Convention heard and passed in both houses the following resolution:

The House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., acting with full realization of the significance of its proposal, hereby invites the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to join with it in accepting the following declaration:

The two Churches . . . hereby formally declare their purpose to achieve organic union between the respective Churches.

Upon the basis of these arguments the two Churches agree to take immediate steps toward the framing of plans whereby this end may be achieved.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose for asking for such a resolution was made quite clear in the Commission's Report. It stated:

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<sup>3</sup>Raymond W. Albright, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church (Macmillan Co., New York: 1964), p. 354.

<sup>4</sup>Journal of the General Convention (1937), printed for the Convention in 1937, pp. 576-577.

Hitherto for fifty years we have conferred from time to time with representatives of that (Presbyterian) Church endeavoring of course to find ways of approach to one another; but all such conferences will take on a different aspect if there are consistent efforts to carry out a declared purpose.<sup>5</sup>

It becomes evident from this statement that the Commission felt that more progress could be achieved if the Church could consider a specific plan of union rather than be content with mere discussion and speculation. The Commission believed that the dialogue which had continued for fifty years had been helpful in creating the present favorable atmosphere: now was the time for some action.

Between the General Conventions of 1937 and 1940, the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians worked together to produce a Proposed Concordat that would point to the basic issues that formed the greatest agreement and disagreement between the two Churches. Such a Proposed Concordat, issued in October 1938, had the purpose in the words of the Commission on Approaches to Unity of "throwing it open for discussion and enlightening comment by both Churches."<sup>6</sup> The real issues of disagreement between the two Churches were faced at the outset. The Presbyterian Church, for example, would "not consider any proposals which imply that their present ordained ministers are not true effectual ministers of the Word and Sacrament."<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1937), printed for the Convention in 1937, p. 576.

<sup>6</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1940), printed for the Convention in 1940, p. 682.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 683.

Episcopal Church felt that it was equally important that "our own Church . . . not . . . give up the historic episcopate and episcopal ordination."<sup>8</sup> The Proposed Concordat, therefore, had the purpose of being "a sincere attempt to find a way through this impasse, consistent with the realities of the life in Christ found within the two Churches."<sup>9</sup>

As a means of promoting better understanding between the two Churches, the House of Bishops at the 1940 General Convention voted to allow Presbyterian ministers into Episcopal pulpits. The House of Deputies, usually more conservative than the bishops, was not prepared to concur on this proposal and as a result it was subsequently defeated.

The General Convention of 1940 was certainly a hint of things to come during the next six years. The unanimous acceptance of the proposal in 1937 that the Episcopal Church join with the Presbyterian Church in discussions looking towards organic union was beginning to be met with many reservations and certainly much less enthusiasm. The battle lines were being drawn and it was during these next three years that a division within the Episcopal Church itself was clearly becoming evident.

We shall be paying special attention to these events during the next six years (1940 to 1946) because what happened then may have some parallels in our consideration

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<sup>8</sup>Journal of the General Convention (1940), printed for the Convention in 1940, p. 683.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

of the prospects for a plan of union that will eventually emerge from the Consultation on Church Union. It also must be pointed out that many of the mistakes made during this period will and are being carefully considered by the Consultation on Church Union in order that a "repeat performance" of 1946 will not occur when a plan of union is brought up for consideration sometime in the future by the General Convention.

Between the General Convention of 1940 and 1946, all previous plans of union were put aside and two new documents ("Joint Ordination" and "Basic Principles") were prepared by the Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity and the Commission of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The "Basic Principles," issued jointly, considered several underlying assumptions. Among these assumptions were the following:

The aim of our negotiations is to achieve organic union between the two Churches rather than the lesser goals of cooperation and federation.

. . . . .  
The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is part of the Holy Catholic Church . . . .

. . . . .  
(To say this) . . . is to say that its ministry is a real ministry of the Word and Sacraments and that its Sacraments are genuine means of grace.<sup>10</sup>

The final underlying assumption of "Basic Principles" asked that all members of both Churches be informed of the issues "so that the members of each know what is

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<sup>10</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1943), printed for the Convention in 1943, p. 602.

proposed and what is not proposed, so that they understand and appreciate the genius of the other." <sup>11</sup>

The document, "Basic Principles," was a part of the Joint Commission of Approaches to Unity's Majority Report. The majority of the Commission urged that it be passed by the General Convention. The Minority Report, however, indicated quite clearly that some churchmen were not pleased with what had been thus far proposed. There was a genuine feeling among the signers of the Minority Report that the Church was being pushed hastily into union with the Presbyterian Church. The Minority Report of the Commission opened with the following statement:

Repeatedly it has been said that "we have agreed to unite." Many of us do not believe we have done any such thing. We have declared our "purpose to achieve organic union," which is quite another matter . . . (Those) . . . who voted the Declaration of Purpose had no idea that they were voting the Episcopal Church into union with the Presbyterian Church.

Without saying it in so many words the (Majority) Report strongly intimates that the Episcopal Church should raise no questions about these issues (the historic episcopate, order of diaconate, confirmation by bishops and/or clergy and the function of the priesthood) but should allow them to be quietly submerged in the comprehensive plan of mutual recognition. <sup>12</sup>

Clearly then, there was little agreement in the Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity. The lines of battle became quite obvious with the so-called liberals or

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<sup>11</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1943), printed for the Convention in 1943, p. 602.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 610-611.

low churchmen soliciting votes in favor of the plan for union and the so-called Anglo-Catholics or high churchmen generally opposing it. Discussion and debate, however, did not reach a fevered pitch in the General Convention of 1943 and consequently neither the Majority nor the Minority Report was accepted by the Convention. Rather, it was decided to continue the Commission with a fairer representation of the varying shades of churchmanship with the hope that a more acceptable plan of union would emerge that would be acceptable to all parts of the Church.

It was between the General Convention of 1943 and 1946 that it became even more obvious what direction the debate on the plans for organic union with the Presbyterian Church would take. Unfortunately, the long awaited report of the Commission did not appear until eight weeks before the General Convention of 1946 which left little time for a careful analysis of what had been proposed. Before the report was issued, however, members of both sides of the debate urged either the acceptance or rejection of the plan for merger without first seeing the report. Regrettably, unfortunate statements were made from both sides which only had the effect of making each side a little more unmovable. In an open letter to Episcopalians, appearing in the March 14, 1946 issue of The Witness, Henry Pitney Van Dusen<sup>13</sup> wrote:

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<sup>13</sup>Note: Dr. Van Dusen is a Presbyterian but a communicant of the Episcopal Church.

(29)

As a son of that Church (Episcopal), I am frankly disturbed by a growing swell of bitterness and scorn toward the Episcopal Church.

The action (taken by the Episcopal Church in 1937 inviting the Presbyterians to join in organic union) took all Presbyterians by complete surprise . . . . With characteristic caution . . . . the Presbyterian leaders made critical and thorough inquiry as to whether this was just another gesture by their sister-communion which had acquired the reputation of "talking more and doing less" about Christian unity than any other major branch of Protestantism.

Each proposal from the Joint Commission has fallen into discard under violent attack from a small minority within the Episcopal Communion.

If they (the Anglo-Catholics) are honest, they know that they at present constitute a minority within the Church. But they live in the hope . . . that the day will come when they can claim a majority of the Church for their views. If union with the Presbyterian Church is effected, that hope will evaporate. <sup>14</sup>

Reaction to Dr. Van Dusen's strongly worded letter was quick in coming from several quarters. A March 31, 1946, Editorial in The Living Church stated: "We deny categorically that that is an actual picture (portrayed by Dr. Van Dusen)." <sup>15</sup>

In this same Editorial, it was further stated:

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<sup>14</sup>Henry P. Van Dusen, "Open Letter to Episcopalian," The Witness, Vol. 29, No. 21, March 14, 1946, pp. 9-10.

<sup>15</sup>Editorial, The Living Church, Vol. CXII, No. 13, March 31, 1946, p. 13.

Meanwhile in the absence of definite information from the Commission itself, the Church has been deluged with pamphlets, articles, and speeches - mostly from non-members of the Commission - declaring that General Convention must take definite action in favor of union with the Presbyterians this year, or else withdraw from the negotiations as gracefully as possible.<sup>16</sup>

One such pamphlet referred to in The Living Church's Editorial was Gardiner M. Day's "Why Unite with the Presbyterians?" In this pamphlet, Dr. Day argued:

They (the Presbyterian Commission) naturally feel that eight years is a long time to wait for the Episcopal Church to make up its mind. We all realize the tremendous urgency of doing everything in our power to bring together the divisions in the Christian Church. A church that cannot learn to live together in unity can hardly hope to call the nations of the world to live in friendship.<sup>17</sup>

As the time grew nearer to the General Convention in 1946 and the Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity still had failed to issue its report, the remarks from both sides became stronger. Bishop Conkling wrote in The Living Church in April 1946:

Who are we to cry "Hurry," and in our haste make waste? To force a decision on the particular proposals for union with the Presbyterian Church (the proposals were issued three months after this article - my note) at the coming General Convention - or at the next one, or at any future Convention would be a sad error in action.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Editorial, The Living Church, Vol. CXII, No. 13, March 31, 1946, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Gardiner M. Day, "Why Unite with the Presbyterians?" - November 1, 1945, (Published at O Garden St., Cambridge, Mass.), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> The Rt. Rev. Wallace E. Conkling, "Not the Time for That Decision," The Living Church, Vol. CXII, No. 14, April 7, 1946, p. 13.

To add to the confusion that was already beginning to sound like an emotional argument rather than a rational and sound debate, Henry Sloane Coffin, the President of Union Theological Seminary, announced to the Presbyterian General Assembly in May 1946 that the yet unpublished Commission's Report called for a "mutual recognition of ministries with no extension of ordination."<sup>19</sup>

When the Commission's Report was finally made public in July 1946, the sides of the debate had long been formed. The Living Church called on the General Convention "to reject in toto the Proposed Basis of Union set forth in the majority report of the Commission"<sup>20</sup> and accept the Minority Report because they "have taken the only course that seems to us right for those who believe that not compromise but Catholicity is the only road to genuine Christian Unity."<sup>21</sup> In actuality, the Majority Report did not state in the "Proposed Basis of Union" that this was the final draft for a plan of union. The Report called for the passage of several resolutions that asked "to continue negotiations with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America."<sup>22</sup> A second resolution asked that the "Proposed Basis of Union" be "received and submitted as worthy of the serious study of the

<sup>19</sup> Raymond W. Albright, p. 356.

<sup>20</sup> Editorial: "Not Unity But Surrender," The Living Church, Vol. CXIII, No. 2, July 14, 1946, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Majority Report, The Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity, quoted from The Episcopalian (Episcopal Evangelical Fellowship), Vol. 1, July 1946, p. 36.

Bishops, Clergy and Laity of our Church . . . looking forward to decisive action by the General Convention of 1949." <sup>23</sup>

The Minority Report was quite explicit in its disagreement with the Commission's Majority Report. Briefly, the Minority Report argued that the General Convention by accepting the "Proposed Basis of Union" would "liquidate itself" <sup>24</sup> if the Episcopal Church accepted the Presbyterian form of government - one assembly rather than the present form of two houses. Secondly, the question of re-ordination could not be considered by the Presbyterians, but the Minority Report stated that "the peculiar and necessary function of a bishop is to ordain. This the Presbyterians flatly deny by asserting that their ministry is on precisely the same foundation as an episcopally ordained ministry." <sup>25</sup> Thirdly, the Minority Report felt that the Majority Report gave "a bishop . . . no more spiritual power than a priest or deacon." <sup>26</sup> Fourthly, the Minority Report was of the opinion that if the Proposals were accepted, it would "ultimately do away with the Prayer Book" <sup>27</sup> because when the time came to create a new worship book "the Presbyterian element

<sup>23</sup> Majority Report, The Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity, quoted from The Episcopalian (Episcopal Evangelical Fellowship), Vol. 1, July 1946, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> Minority Report, Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

vastly outnumbering ours, will issue its own book of worship."<sup>28</sup> Finally, the Minority Report in its summation of the situation stated:

We regret that we cannot acquiesce in presenting the present Proposals to the Church for study.

• • • • • Nevertheless, we cannot believe that it is right in the sight of God and in loyalty to His Church to ask the Church to study, with at least the possibility of accepting what we are profoundly convinced is repugnant to the mind of Christ.<sup>29</sup>

Debate at the General Convention in September of 1946 more or less followed the same general tenor of the discussion that preceded the convention. At times the arguments became emotional pleas either to accept or reject the Majority or Minority Reports. Because no one had had the necessary time adequately to study the Proposals, it was the general impression of all concerned that the Episcopal Church had a mandate to unite with the Presbyterian Church. The sides were too sharply drawn, and in order to preserve the unity of the Episcopal Church itself, the Convention advised the Commission to prepare a new statement and submit it to the Lambeth Conference. The implication was, of course, that the Majority Report was unacceptable. Thus, any real discussions of unity with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. came to a virtual halt for at least fourteen more years.

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<sup>28</sup> Minority Report, Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

There were many reactions following the General Convention of 1946. Commenting on the action (or lack of action) of the Episcopal Church, the editor of the Presbyterian Tribune made the following statement:

Presbyterians . . . are left in the embarrassing position of an engaged maiden whose fiance has just informed her that he has decided to take a trip abroad to try to forget her.

. . . . . In any community what Church is always least ready to cooperate in any community enterprise? . . . What denomination keeps its pulpits closed to ministers of other evangelical Churches? . . . There is but one answer and the answer is the Protestant Episcopal Church.<sup>30</sup>

The bad feelings generated at the General Convention of 1946 continued to be felt in all corners of the Church and were certainly reflected in the various Church magazines and periodicals. The Living Church carried a series of articles that attempted to look at just what had happened. Frankly, some of these articles were not helpful in unifying the various groups within the Episcopal Church.<sup>31</sup>

Fortunately, the various sides on the question of union with the Presbyterian Church did not continue their debate in such an outspoken manner as they had

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<sup>30</sup>Editor of The Presbyterian Tribune, quoted from The Witness, Vol. 30, No. 5, January 9, 1947, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Note: One such article by the Rev. Gregory Mabry entitled "Union Begins at Home" (The Living Church, Vol. CXIII, No. 16, October 20, 1946) is an example. The article is very uncharitable to all forms of churchmanship except the Anglo-Catholic position. The article ends with the words: "So would charity be born at home, and union ensue." (See page 10 of the article.)

previously. As the Church began to prepare for the General Convention in 1949, the arguments simmered down considerably. The Report of the Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity recognized that the varying shades of churchmanship had been in part responsible for what had occurred in 1946 and as result issued the following statement:

We can expect little success in our efforts unless among ourselves there is mutual understanding and charity. It is a glory of the Anglican Communion that it has affirmed the positive insights of both Catholic and Protestant traditions . . . Our glory becomes our shame if any of us unchurch fellow churchmen with whom we differ. <sup>32</sup>

Another positive contribution made by the Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity in 1949 was the "Statement of Faith and Order" which was an attempt to clarify the Episcopal Church's position within the Lambeth Quadrilateral. It is significant to note that this "Statement of Faith and Order" had the approval of the Lambeth Conference of 1948.

The Commission on Approaches to Unity in 1949 requested that study materials be prepared that would be "suitable for clergy and lay people, bearing on issues and problems with union between this Church and the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A." <sup>33</sup> Such materials were prepared and distributed, but the Commission's Report of 1952 made the following evaluation of the results of these materials:

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<sup>32</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1949), printed for the Convention in 1949, p. 661.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 659.

Responsibility for implementing meetings of this sort (joint services and study groups on all levels of the Church including the seminaries) of necessity had to be left to the bishops and seminary deans. There have been occasional interchanges of lectures, preachers and students on the seminary level, but the Commission has had reported to it very few instances of other joint meetings.<sup>34</sup>

With no pressure on the Episcopal Church to consider any immediate plans for merger, ecumenical activities once again settled down to discussion and conversation with our Protestant brethren. The General Conventions of 1955 and 1958 were not marked by any great achievements or progress in this area except to create a more favorable atmosphere for ecumenical discussions among the varying shades of churchmanship. This problem has not been completely resolved as we shall see in our further consideration of the Consultation on Church Union, but what is important to note is that the atmosphere was cleared enough so that the Blake Proposal made in 1960 was enthusiastically received in almost all quarters of the Episcopal Church. It is to this subject that the Third Chapter of our examination of the Episcopal Church and the Consultation on Church Union now turns.

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<sup>34</sup>Journal of the General Convention (1952), printed for the Convention in 1952, p. 662.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

On December 4, 1960, Eugene Carson Blake, the Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., delivered at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, his now well-known sermon entitled: "A Proposal Toward the Reunion of Christ's Church." At the very beginning of his address, Dr. Blake made it clear that his was "not an official proposal"<sup>1</sup> because his Church had given him "no authority to make such a proposal officially on behalf of my Church."<sup>2</sup> Rather, Dr. Blake was speaking "as one minister of Jesus Christ who believes that God requires us to break through the barriers of nearly 500 years of history, to attempt under God to transcend the separate traditions of our Churches and to find a way to unite them . . . ."<sup>3</sup> The impact of Dr. Blake's sermon was due primarily to the fact that he came to grips in simple but forceful language with the central problems that must be considered in creating a united church. The heart of his sermon argued that "a reunited Church must be both reformed and catholic."<sup>4</sup> Under the headings of the "catholic" and the "reformed" traditions within Christianity, Dr. Blake listed the principles of union that are important to all those in these particular traditions.

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Carson Blake, "A Proposal Toward the Reunion of Christ's Church," December 4, 1960, reprinted in The Challenge to Reunion, ed. by Robert McAfee Brown and David H. Scott, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York: 1963), p. 271.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

Under the heading of the "catholic" tradition, Dr. Blake listed the following principles:

- 1) The reunited Church must have visible and historical continuity with the Church of all ages before and after the Reformation.

I mention first this principle of visible and historical continuity (bishops) . . . because it is the only basis on which a broad reunion can take place . . .

- 2) The reunited Church must clearly confess the historic trinitarian faith received from the Apostles and set forth in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.
- 3) The reunited Church must administer the two sacraments instituted by Christ, the Lord's Supper and Baptism.<sup>5</sup>

Under the heading of the "reformed" tradition, Dr. Blake listed the following principles:

- 1) The reunited Church must accept the principles of continuing reformation under the Word of God by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) The reunited Church must be truly democratic in its government, recognizing that the whole people of God are Christ's Church, that all Christians are Christ's ministers even though some in the Church are separated and ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament.
- 3) The reunited Church must seek in a new way to recapture the brotherhood and sense of fellowship of all its members and ministers.

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<sup>5</sup>Eugene Carson Blake, "A Proposal Toward the Reunion of Christ's Church," December 4, 1960, reprinted in The Challenge to Reunion, ed. by Robert McAfee Brown and David H. Scott, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York: 1963), pp. 275-277.

- 4) Finally the reunited Church must find the way to include within its catholicity (and because of it) a wide diversity of theological formulation of the faith and a variety of worship and liturgy including worship that is non-liturgical.<sup>6</sup>

After listing the important principles that must be included in any consideration of unity, Dr. Blake concluded his sermon by stating:

There are two results that I pray may, under God, come from it. If there is support for what I have said in my own Church, any or all of our presbyteries may, if they will, overture the General Assembly which meets next May asking that Assembly to make an official proposal. I further hope that the Protestant Episcopal Church, by its own processes, will also take early action in this direction so that in your General Convention next fall the invitation to the Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ may be jointly issued to proceed to draw up a plan of union to which any other Churches of Christ accepting the basis suggested and the plan developed will be warmly invited to join.<sup>7</sup>

What Dr. Blake said in his sermon on December 4, 1960, was not startlingly new or different. The impact that it made on many people was because of the directness and earnestness in which it was stated. In fact, one may easily see several similarities to the four points of the Lambeth Quadrilateral that had been proposed originally by William Reed Huntington ninety years earlier. Another important characteristic of this sermon was the careful attention that Dr. Blake paid

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<sup>6</sup>Eugene Carson Blake, "A Proposal Toward the Reunion of Christ's Church," December 4, 1960, reprinted in The Challenge to Reunion, ed. by Robert McAfee Brown and David H. Scott, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York: 1963), pp. 277-280.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

to all aspects of churchmanship, especially within the Episcopal Church. It is quite apparent that Dr. Blake had in mind the failure of the 1946 negotiations between the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches and carefully took them into consideration in his sermon.

Reaction to Dr. Blake's sermon was immediate. James A. Pike, the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of California, was moved to make a positive statement to what had been proposed by Dr. Blake. He said: "I cannot proceed with the liturgy without saying an enthusiastic Amen to what this great Christian leader has said . . . ." <sup>8</sup> Because the National Council of Churches met in San Francisco at the same time as Dr. Blake delivered his sermon, his proposal for a reunited Church was well covered in the national press. Reactions from all quarters of the Episcopal Church were also swift in coming. The majority of the reactions were favorable and enthusiastic. For example, The Living Church in an Editorial stated:

In our opinion, Dr. Blake's proposal represents a great stride forward in Protestant understanding and acceptance of the Catholic concept of the faith and life of the Church.

. . . . .

But, if the evident breadth and vision of Dr. Blake's proposal is mirrored by others - in the Presbyterian, Methodist, and United Churches, as well as in the Episcopal Church - we must confess that we could grow enthusiastic about the possibilities of a Reformed and Catholic Church in the United States. <sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>James A. Pike, "Response to Dr. Blake's Sermon," quoted from The Challenge to Reunion, p. 283.

<sup>9</sup>Editorial, The Living Church, Vol. 143, No. 25, December 18, 1960, p. 17.

In view of the position that The Living Church took in the 1946 negotiations between the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches, this Editorial showed even more clearly the acceptable qualities of Dr. Blake's Proposal.

Although the majority of all churchmen in the Episcopal Church favored Dr. Blake's Proposal, there was one group in the Church that could find very little merit in it. The group in question was the American Church Union, which through its magazine, The American Church News, made the following points in an Official ACU Statement in its January 1961 issue:

The point of reference which surrounds the Proposal is erroneous and unacceptable both in Dr. Blake's sermon and in the subsequent statements released to the press by Bishop Pike and Dr. Blake.

A careful study of the Proposal indicates that sacrifice of essential principle is only demanded of Episcopalian.

In terms of Christian unity this Proposal leads only down a dead-end street completely setting aside the doctrines of this Church in the Book of Common Prayer.

unity will come only when penitence brings us all to a humble acceptance of what has already been prepared for us and given to us for our salvation.<sup>10</sup>

Fortunately, the attitude as reflected in the American Church Union statement did not prevail and only represented a small minority within the Episcopal Church. Nevertheless, such a minority must be taken into consideration because it is part of the Episcopal Church. This will be dealt with in a later chapter.

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<sup>10</sup>"The Official ACU Statement on the Blake Proposal," The American Church News, Vol. XXVII, No. 12, January 1961, pp. 7-8.

In May 1961, the 173rd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church followed through on Dr. Blake's Proposal by issuing the following Resolution:

The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America . . . invites the Protestant Episcopal Church . . . to join us in an invitation to the Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ to explore the establishment of a united church truly Catholic, truly Reformed, and truly Evangelical.<sup>11</sup>

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church later that Fall received and acted favorably on the invitation of the United Presbyterian Church. The House of Bishops unanimously approved the invitation as did the House of Deputies (with only a handful in opposition), but not until they had amended the proposal by stating that the representatives of the four Churches should operate within the framework of the Lambeth Quadrilateral. Thus, the stage was set for the first meeting of what was to become known as the Consultation on Church Union. What is important to note is that unlike the negotiations of 1946, no definite time schedule was established. There was no mandate to unite as was the unfortunate impression in 1946. This is not to say that church union is not the goal of the

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<sup>11</sup>Resolution of the 173rd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., May 1961, quoted from The Journal of the General Convention (1961), printed for the Convention in 1961, p. 754. (Note: It is important to understand that the Presbyterian invitation to the Episcopal Church did not contain Dr. Blake's ideas for a united church - this is something that only a Consultation can do - rather the Resolution was only an invitation "to explore the establishment of a united church" without any pre-existing conditions for such a discussion.)

Consultation on Church Union, but if union is to be achieved then "each Church will review the progress of the work at each meeting of its plenary body and that when a plan of union is agreed upon by the joint negotiating Committee, each Church will then decide whether to adopt it." <sup>12</sup> In other words, those who represent the various Churches involved in the Consultation do not have a "carte blanche" to commit their particular Church to a plan of union without the explicit approval of their Church.

In November 1961, committees of nine appointed by the Episcopal Church and the United Presbyterian Church met in Washington, D. C. "to implement the action taken by their parent bodies." <sup>13</sup> Also present at this meeting were representatives of the Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ. As proposed by the Presbyterian Church's Resolution, letters of invitation were sent to the Methodist Church and United Church of Christ and subsequently these Churches accepted the invitation. The 1961 planning committee, meeting in Washington, agreed to hold the first Consultation of the four Churches the following April 9th and 10th in Washington, D. C.

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<sup>12</sup> Resolution of the 173rd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., May 1961, quoted from The Journal of the General Convention (1961), printed for the Convention in 1961, p. 754.

<sup>13</sup> James I. McCord, Digest of the Proceedings of the Consultation on Church Union, Vols. I and II combined, p. 2.

The first meeting of the Consultation on Church Union in 1962 was described by James I. McCord, the Consultation's first President, as "exploratory in character."<sup>14</sup> One of the important characteristics of the first meeting of the Consultation (and the three meetings that have followed) was the presentation of scholarly papers that attempted to come to grips with some of the main problems of unity. These papers have played a more and more important role throughout the four meetings of the Consultation, because discussion and resolutions adopted by the Consultation have usually been the result of them. At the first meeting in 1962, two such papers were presented that dealt with the present situation "making unity discussions both necessary and promising."<sup>15</sup>

The first meeting of the Consultation extended invitations to the Evangelical United Brethren Church (because they had been discussing unity with the Methodist Church), the Disciples of Christ (because they had been discussing unity with the United Church of Christ), and the Polish National Catholic Church (because they were in full communion with the Episcopal Church) to join as full participants in the discussions. The Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Disciples of Christ accepted this invitation and became full participants at the Consultation's second meeting in March 1963.<sup>16</sup> Also, invitations were extended to all the

<sup>14</sup> James I. McCord, Digest of the Proceedings of the Consultation on Church Union, Vols. I and II combined, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Digest of the Proceedings of the Consultation on Church Union, Vols. I and II combined, p. 6. Hereafter referred to as: Digest of Proceedings.

Churches in North America to send two observer-consultants to the future meetings of the Consultation "upon nomination by the delegation of any of the participating churches."<sup>17</sup>

The size of each Church's delegation was set at nine because it was felt by the Consultation that "that number would appear to ensure a group from each church that is fully representative and, at the same time, a total conference of a size where ecumenical conversation may still be effectively carried on."<sup>18</sup>

The Episcopal Church's delegation reflected a good representation of the Church's membership, thereby insuring to some degree that all quarters of the Church were to be fairly and equally represented. This is important to note because during the Church's negotiations for unity in 1943 with the Presbyterian Church, much of the resentment that arose was due to the feeling of many that the Commission on Approaches to Unity was too one-sided and did not represent the true character of the Church.

The closing statement of the first meeting of the Consultation on Church Union best reflected the accomplishments of the meeting. It stated:

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<sup>17</sup> Digest of the Proceedings of the Consultation on Church Union, Vols. I and II combined, p. 6. Hereafter referred to as: Digest of Proceedings.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

We have made no attempt to reach agreement in areas of difference. Rather, we have sought to isolate issues that need further study and clarification. Among these are: (1) the historical basis for the Christian ministry that is found in the scriptures and the early church; (2) the origins, use and standing of creeds and confessional statements; (3) a restatement of the theology of liturgy; (4) the relation of word and sacraments.<sup>19</sup>

To many people who are accustomed to seeing things done quickly, this first meeting of the Consultation may seem to have accomplished little. However, in view of past ecumenical discussions and in light of the many traditions that were represented by the four Churches and the many different traditions within each of the Churches, this first historic meeting of the Consultation on Church Union accomplished exactly what and no less than it set out to do. Unity may take years - even one or two generations - but there was no idea present at this first meeting to rush into a premature plan of union because many of the areas of disagreement had only been mentioned as areas of future study and had not yet been fully discussed. The second meeting of the Consultation on Church Union began discussions on just such problems of unity that were suggested at this first meeting, and it is only from such thorough discussions that a plan of union can ever hope to be drafted by all the Churches involved.

Between the meetings of 1962 and 1963, a book was published entitled The Challenge to Reunion which dealt with the Blake Proposal and the reactions

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<sup>19</sup> Digest of the Proceedings of the Consultation on Church Union, Vols. I and II combined, p. 19. Hereafter referred to as: Digest of Proceedings.

to it by various members of the Churches participating in the Consultation. One of the editors, Robert McAfee Brown, stated in his introduction to the book: "The hope is that it (the book) will contribute to that discussion in such a way as to elicit responses, rejoinders, and further reflection than would have been the case without it."<sup>20</sup> One of the Episcopal Church's members who responded to the invitation to comment on the Blake Proposal was the Rev. Charles D. Kean, a member of his Church's delegation to the Consultation. Dr. Kean was a full supporter of the work being done in the Consultation, but he was much aware also of the private fears that many Episcopalians had towards church unity. By publicly airing and discussing some of these "Anglican apprehensions"<sup>21</sup> he hoped that more churchmen would take these apprehensions seriously - "to be thought through by Anglicans so as to appreciate what they really mean, and to be understood sympathetically by those with whom we discuss unity."<sup>22</sup> The Consultation itself was well aware of the fact that all the issues being discussed by the Consultation must be brought before the Church at large. As a result, magazine articles and several pamphlets were issued or were being prepared prior to the 1963 meeting with the hope that more church-wide discussions would take place.

<sup>20</sup> Robert McAfee Brown, "Introduction," The Challenge to Reunion, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Charles D. Kean, "An Anglican Approach to Unity," The Challenge to Reunion, pp. 239-243.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

The second meeting of the Consultation on Church Union was held on March 19-21, 1963, in Oberlin, Ohio. At this meeting, there were six participating Churches (The Disciples of Christ, The Evangelical United Brethren Church, The Methodist Church, The Protestant Episcopal Church, The United Church of Christ, and The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.) and sixteen observer-consultants. In preparation for the 1963 meeting, three study papers were presented on the subjects of "Scripture, Tradition, and the Guardians of Tradition," "Analysis of the Participating Communions" (a sociological approach), and "The Worship and Witness of the Church." Commenting on these topics in the book Where We Are In Church Union, the Secretary for the Consultation, George L. Hunt, wrote:

The discussion at Oberlin on these three subjects was all too brief, yet a surprising agreement on the matter of Scripture and Tradition buoyed the hopes of all persons present that perhaps a breakthrough had taken place that would hasten further agreements in the future. <sup>23</sup>

The Report on "Scripture, Tradition, and the Guardians of Tradition," was, as Dr. Hunt indicated, an important statement which received considerable agreement among the members of the Consultation. In part, the Report stated:

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<sup>23</sup> George L. Hunt, "These Churches are Met Together," Where We Are In Church Union (A Reflection Book, Association Press, New York: 1965), pp. 15-16.

The six churches represented in the Consultation on Church Union recognize and acknowledge that Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have a unique authority.

The churches represented in this Consultation affirm the Holy Scriptures to be canonical, that is, the norm of their total life, including worship and witness and teaching and mission.

The members of the Consultation are agreed that there is a historic Christian Tradition. Each of our churches inevitably appeals to that Tradition in matters of faith and practice. But the clearer delineation and characterization of that Tradition is a task still to be completed.

By Tradition we understand the whole life of the Church ever guided and nourished by the Holy Spirit, and expressed in its worship, witness, way of life, and its order.<sup>24</sup>

By reaching an agreement on this statement, the Consultation was in a better position "to explore further the role of symbols, such as creeds and confessions, and the role of the ministries which have special responsibilities for guarding the Church's total life from distortion and corruption."<sup>25</sup> The Report also introduced an element of Eastern Orthodox thought on "Tradition." Thus, by the adoption of this Report the groundwork had been laid for deeper discussions on subjects that are necessary to any unity talks.

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<sup>24</sup> Report on "Scripture, Tradition and the Guardians of Tradition," Digest of Proceedings, Vols. I and II combined, pp. 44-45.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

The second Report of the 1963 meeting of the Consultation dealt with a "Sociological Analysis of the Participating Communions." A paper presented by Paul M. Harrison of Princeton University was the basis of this Report.<sup>26</sup> Dr. Harrison wrote in his Concluding Hypothesis:

The existing configurations and tendencies of formal power and informal authority tend more and more to resemble one another from denomination to denomination. Therefore, differences of opinion in the realm of organization are more likely to be generated or stimulated by a preference for a commitment to symbols, traditional terminologies, and interpretive formulae than by any significant operational or functional differences.<sup>27</sup>

In summarizing this paper, the Report as adopted by the Consultation stated:

"In its analysis of function, the paper points to the possibility of combining in a united church episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational polities."<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that these two reports as adopted by the Consultation were beginning to focus more and more on one of the main issues that have thwarted unity discussions for over seventy years - namely the place of the historic episcopate and the use of presbyterian and congregational forms of government in a united church.

The Reports of the 1963 meeting are significant because they show an openness

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<sup>26</sup> Report on "Analysis of the Participating Communions," Digest of Proceedings, Vols. I and II combined, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Paul M. Harrison, "Sociological Analysis of the Participating Communions," Digest of Proceedings, p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Report on "Analysis of the Participating Communions," Digest of Proceedings, Vols. I and II combined, p. 46.

and willingness to come to terms with the central problems in any discussion of unity. The adoption of these Reports also prepared the way for the meetings of 1964 and 1965 which dealt more specifically with the question of the ministry and sacraments.

The same openness was reflected in the third and final Report on "Worship and Witness of the Church." Based on a paper by Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., Professor of Liturgies at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, the Report, as adopted by the Consultation, stated:

The living Tradition of the Church implies certain basic elements of Christian worship but does not confine worship to a single plan or form. Unity does not preclude freedom nor require uniformity. <sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the openness that is indicated in these three Reports of the second meeting of the Consultation is best reflected in the 1963 Closing Statement. It states:

We believe that the Consultation has reached an important consensus on the crucial question of authority in the Church. On the basis of this consensus we find ourselves now ready to grapple with the sharp issues that in our history have been causes of division and walls of separation between us. <sup>30</sup>

The first two meetings of the Consultation on Church Union did not produce any dramatic results, but a sense of cooperation and openness had been established

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<sup>29</sup> Report on "Worship and Witness of the Church," Digest of Proceedings, Vols. I and II combined, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Closing Statement of the 1963 Meeting, Digest of Proceedings, Vols. I and II combined, p. 50.

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between the six participating Churches and this is essential to any discussions of unity. The meetings of 1964 and 1965 came to specific terms with the major areas of disagreement. However, we must not forget that the groundwork for these discussions was laid in these 1962 and 1963 meetings. It is with this in mind that the next chapter turns to examine the 1964 and 1965 meetings of the Consultation on Church Union.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

The third meeting of the Consultation on Church Union was held on April 13-16, 1964, in Princeton, New Jersey. As in the 1963 meeting, there were six participating churches and a number of observer-consultants. For the first time in the history of the Consultation, there were two observer-consultants who had been appointed by the Secretariat on Unity of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> In the words of the Chairman, James I. McCord, the task of the third meeting of the Consultation was to "move to a discussion of one ministry, one baptism and one table."<sup>2</sup>

As indicated by the three topics under consideration, this meeting of the Consultation moved into a new phase of its history. After the surprising agreement in the 1963 meeting on "Scripture, Tradition and the Guardians of Tradition," the Consultation felt that it was ready now to grapple with some of the basic issues of church unity. Because of the nature of the topics under consideration at this 1964 meeting, the Consultation approved the following preamble to precede each Report:

The Consultation sets forth these statements as consensus on the points covered. They are not to be thought of as expressing the full doctrinal position of any of our churches, nor as an exhaustive treatment of the subjects covered, nor as representing final conclusions of the Consultation. The

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<sup>1</sup>Digest of Proceedings of the Consultation on Church Union, Vol. III, p. 7. Hereafter referred to as: Digest of Proceedings.

<sup>2</sup>James I. McCord, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 2.

comments and criticisms of all church members will be welcomed as we continue our search for God's truth and God's will toward the establishment of a united church which will be truly catholic, truly reformed, and truly evangelical.<sup>3</sup>

The first subject under consideration by the Consultation was "One Ministry." On the basis of two papers written by John T. McNeill and J. Robert Nelson, the Consultation presented a Report which in part stated:

1) Jesus Christ Gives the Gift of Ministry.

In their trusting and obedient response to God's mighty act of reconciliation through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the people of God receive from Him their commission to ministry.

2) The Ministry is to Church and World.

By means of the proclaimed Word in preaching and the enacted Word in sacraments, the gathered community is sent forth (dispersed) in compassion to be among men as servants (ministers) in the world . . . . It is this mission to both the Church and the world which determines the nature of the Church's existence and ministry.

3) The Ministry of the Whole People of God.

This ministry is given to the whole people of God.

4) Within the Whole Ministry of the Church Is an Ordained Ministry.

Within the community of His people, God calls forth an ordained ministry which He gives for the life, growth, and mission of the Church. Neither the Church nor the ordained ministry can exist without the other.

5) We seek to express the oneness of our ministry.

In the labors of the Consultation on Church Union we seek an authentic way of receiving those forms of ministry which God wills for a united church.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Report on "One Ministry," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, pp. 20-24.

The final section of the Report on "One Ministry" reflected the consensus of opinion that the Consultation had come to terms with the ministry in a very general way and that a considerable amount of further study would be required. Such questions as the following needed to be discussed:

How are these ministerial orders of bishops, presbyters (elders), and deacons in the united church to be defined, and what functions are to be related to them?  
What forms and interpretation should characterize the historic episcopate in the united church? <sup>5</sup>

The main unresolved question was centered around the function and interpretation of bishops in a united church. During the session that discussed the report on "One Ministry," Dr. William J. Wolf, a member of the Episcopal Church's delegation, pointed out that his Church was required "to conduct these conversations on the basis of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral." <sup>6</sup> This meant, of course, that the Episcopal Church must discuss the ministry within the bounds of the historic episcopate. The whole question of the ministry was so basic to church unity that the Consultation agreed to devote the entire 1965 meeting to this issue. This decision was best seen in the Consultation's closing statement which included the following words:

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<sup>5</sup> Report on "One Ministry," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Resolution of the General Convention of 1961, quoted from Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 9.

Believing that the establishment of one ordained ministry, recognized by us all, is critical to our union effort, we have authorized the executive committee to plan the work for this year so that we can be led to the consideration of proposals which will contain the shape and functions of the ordered ministry of the united church as well as a way or ways by which it might be established.<sup>7</sup>

The Reports on "One Baptism" and "One Table," also basic to any discussion on church unity, enabled the Consultation to reach a closer understanding and agreement on these subjects than they had on "One Ministry." As stated in the Report on "One Baptism," it was agreed that "Baptism is a divine ordinance or sacrament and forms the visible basis of our unity."<sup>8</sup> Within the six participating Churches of the Consultation, there were two positions regarding baptism - "infant" and "adult" - that appeared to be opposed. Yet, the Consultation was able to make the following statement regarding these positions: "In spite of tensions within our communions, and weaknesses of practice, infant baptism and adult baptism both seek to express and fulfill the same spiritual life."<sup>9</sup> Commenting on this passage, Stephen F. Bayne, Jr. has written:

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<sup>7</sup> Closing Statement of the 1964 meeting, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Report on "One Baptism," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

This mutual discovery does not end the problem. All it means is that the proponents of each school of thought now understand the other, and can see ways in which his understanding and practice need to be broadened and deepened.<sup>10</sup>

The final section of the Report on "One Baptism" contained an agreement of what the rite of baptism should include:

- 1) The use of water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- 2) A confession of sin and repentance, an affirmation of faith, and a promise of a life of obedience to Christ on the part of the baptizand or his sponsors.
- 3) The administration normally by an ordained minister in the presence of the sponsoring congregation, except in unusual circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

The third and final Report of the 1964 meeting of the Consultation dealt with the subject of the Lord's Supper. The Report, entitled "One Table," began by stating: "The Eucharist proclaims the reconciliation accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ and the oneness of the redeemed community. Yet our Churches do not celebrate the Eucharist in unity."<sup>12</sup> Again, the question of the ministry could not be avoided. The Report continued:

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen F. Bayne, Jr., "Facing Facts on Church Union," The Episcopalian, Vol. 131, No. 4, April 1966, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Report on "One Baptism," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Report on "One Table," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 29.

We have found growing areas of agreement in both practice and understanding; we have also found differences, especially the difficult question which has proved so divisive in the past, of the authorization of the Church's minister who presides at the One Table . . . .<sup>13</sup>

In spite of a lack of agreement on the ministry, the Report on "One Table" was able to agree generally on the form and interpretation of the Eucharist. The fourth and final section of the Report reflected "a growing consensus of interpretation in all our churches."<sup>14</sup> In part, it stated:

- 1) In the Lord's Supper, symbols and symbolic actions are used. However, the Eucharist is an effective sign; the action of the Church becomes the effective means whereby God in Christ acts and Christ is present with his people . . . .
- 2) Christ is the minister, the high priest of the Eucharist. It is not our table, but the Lord's Table . . . .
- 3) Christ is present as the Crucified who died for our sins and who rose again for our justification, as the once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world who gives Himself to the faithful.
- 4) The Holy Communion is the presence of Christ who has come, who comes to His people, and who will come in glory.<sup>15</sup>

The third meeting of the Consultation produced little agreement on that basic question of church unity - the ministry. The same encouragement and enthusiasm that characterized the 1962 and 1963 meetings were not present at the

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<sup>13</sup> Report on "One Table," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

end of the 1964 meeting. Some of the previous spirit was lacking in the Closing Statement which began by stating: "We are met once again to explore the establishment of a united church. We intend to stay together. We intend to go forward together."<sup>16</sup>

This third meeting faced some of the most difficult questions that have divided the Churches for centuries. From the Reports on "One Table" and "One Ministry," it became clear that the Consultation would have to face the whole question of the ministry before moving any closer to a united church. The Consultation agreed that the entire 1965 meeting would be devoted entirely to this topic.

In the Closing Statement of the 1963 meeting, the Consultation asked "the delegations of each participating communion to seek authority from its plenary body to enter into the preparation of a plan of union so that no unnecessary delay may keep us from moving beyond the exploration phase of our work. . . ."<sup>17</sup> This request was made in the enthusiasm of the 1963 meeting, but it was not until the Fall of 1964 that the next General Convention met. The Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity then reported on the progress of the three years of discussions. With characteristic caution and probably with the last meeting of the Consultation

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<sup>16</sup> Closing Statement of the 1964 meeting, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. III, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Closing Statement of the 1963 meeting, Digest of Proceedings, Vols. I and II combined, p. 50.

fresh in mind, the Commission made the following reference to the Closing Statement of 1963: "The Joint Commission reports this proposal to the General Convention, but for several reasons does not recommend its adoption at the present time."<sup>18</sup> The Report proceeded to offer the Commission's reasons for this negative reaction:

One of the lessons of the Ecumenical Movement is that some of its failures and disappointments have resulted from precipitate action. Before any commitment should be made to the negotiation of a Plan of Union there must be, as the Consultation itself acknowledges, sufficient theological consensus to support this activity with the promise of achievement. To date, there have been only two meetings of the Consultation (1963 and 1964) at which conversations have grappled with profound issues of division among the Churches. Encouraging as the progress has been, the exploratory phase of the conversations is still proceeding.<sup>19</sup>

In making this submission, the Joint Commission also had regard to the 1946 negotiations between the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches. It was the opinion of many that those negotiations had produced a Plan of Union which was premature in that it was not based upon a firm foundation of agreement.

The fourth meeting of the Consultation on Church Union met April 5 - 8, 1965, in Lexington, Kentucky. The 1963 and 1964 meetings of the Consultation all

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<sup>18</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1964), printed for the Convention in 1964, p. 957.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

pointed to the need to devote a full session to the subject of the ministry. Thus, the topic of the 1965 meeting was "The Ordained Ministry." In his introductory statement at the 1965 meeting, Robert F. Gibson, Jr., the Chairman of the Consultation stated:

In all candor, I know that many of us went home from Princeton a year ago with mixed feelings: hopeful, yet questioning our unity of purpose and commitment - questioning the reality of the road ahead.

We need not, however, start today from that point....  
There is good reason to believe that we meet again<sup>20</sup> today in a more determined mood.

For this meeting, the Consultation was formed into two commissions - one to consider "The Ordained Ministry in a United Church," the other to consider "Ordination in a Church Catholic, Evangelical and Reformed." As in the previous meetings of the Consultation, the bases for the Reports of the two Commissions were the study papers prepared by various members of the participating churches. One of the seven papers prepared for the 1965 meeting was a helpful background study of "The Ordained Ministries in Uniting Churches" by William J. Wolf. The paper contained an extensive analysis of what had been accomplished in previous union schemes, explaining that "it has relevance for our concerns and problems in the United States."<sup>21</sup> The largest section of this study paper considered the

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<sup>20</sup> Robert F. Gibson, Jr., "Introductory Statement," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, pp. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> William J. Wolf, "The Ordained Ministry in Uniting Churches," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 37.

ordained ministry in the Church of South India, noting that "nearly every plan of church union since has quarried from its experience and often is a paraphrase of its Constitution."<sup>22</sup> While it is not possible to examine closely the ordained ministry in the Church of South India, the influence of its Constitution was reflected in the Report of Commission I, entitled: "The Ordained Ministry in a United Church." The Report considered "three basic aspects of the ordained ministry - its authority, its continuity, and its function in the Church."<sup>23</sup>

The first aspect of the ordained ministry under consideration by the Report was "Authority." In this section, it reached an important conclusion on the historic episcopate. In part, the Report stated:

God calls men to the ministry of Word and Sacrament and gives them the gifts needed to carry out their calling. Authority from the church to perform this ministry is conveyed through ordination . . . . Since, under normal conditions, office and authority in the church should be conveyed through the action of those officers who have been duly chosen to convey it, the historic episcopate commends itself as personifying the continuity of churchly authority. In the united church the historic episcopate, constitutionally defined, will be gratefully accepted as a gift of God, serving, in union with other appropriate agents, to authorize the ministry of Word and Sacrament.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup>William J. Wolf, "The Ordained Ministry in Uniting Churches," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 38.

<sup>23</sup>Report of Commission I, "The Ordained Ministry in a United Church," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

The second section of the Report considered "Continuity" in light of "The Ordained Ministry in a United Church." It stated:

In order to maintain the continuity of the ordained ministry in the united church with the ministries of the uniting churches, ordination in the united church will be effected by prayer with the laying on of hands, a rite used in each of our respective churches . . .

A major purpose of episcopal ordination has been to provide continuity in ministry. <sup>25</sup>

The final section of the Report of Commission I dealt with the "Function" of "The Ordained Ministry in a United Church." After restating what had been said at Princeton the year before, the Report raised certain issues that were said to "need further clarification." <sup>26</sup> The relationship between the ordained and unordained was the primary concern of this section. <sup>27</sup>

The Report of Commission II considered "Ordination in a Church Catholic, Evangelical and Reformed." The second section of this Report examined a "United Ministry" in terms of "truly catholic," "truly evangelical," and "truly reformed." Under the heading of "truly catholic," the Report stated:

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<sup>25</sup> Report of Commission I, "The Ordained Ministry in a United Church," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

In the Consultation we have reached the point where we are willing to explore the outlines of a united church which accepts the historic episcopate as symbol and agent of the continuity of the Church and its ministry with the witnesses of our Lord's death and resurrection . . . .

Our agreement does not imply repudiation of the ordination received by the ministers of any of the several churches in the Consultation . . . .

The formation of a united church will, therefore, require mutual expression of the need and desire for the union of our ministries, and a rite, invoking God's help, which would symbolize and effect the uniting of our ministerial traditions. Such a rite by the Grace of God would manifest our ministry's continuity with that of the ancient church.<sup>28</sup>

Under the heading of "truly evangelical," the Report made the following statement:

Ordination in such a church is intended to provide a ministry which can commend the riches of the gospel from experience and which grounds its certainties in the apostolic message of the New Testament . . . .

Passion for the conversion of the world is an essential characteristic of the evangelical church.<sup>29</sup>

Under the heading of "truly reformed," the Report stated: "In a church truly reformed we must have a constant disposition to subject our traditional concepts and conventional practices - both catholic and evangelical - to the judgement and correction of the Holy Spirit . . . ." <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Report of Commission II, "Ordination in a Church Catholic, Evangelical and Reformed," Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

The final section of the Report of Commission II drew the following conclusions:

In speaking thus of these three attributes of the united church to which we are called, we have recognized that each in its fullness implies the others . . . .

Essential to such a united church is a united ministry, capable of bearing undoubted and unquestionable authority everywhere . . . .

Such a united ministry cannot be established by passing judgement on the past, by attempting evaluation of present regularity or validity, or by mere addition of our separatenesses.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike the Church of South India which did not have a service of mutual reconciliation in which all clergy received equal standing through the laying on of hands, the Report advocated:

A corporate act in which and through which all would offer our existing ministries to Almighty God, asking Him to receive our offering through Jesus Christ, to complete and perfect what is amiss or incomplete in our ministries and to give us whatever of His authority and grace we need to serve in the united ministry to which we are called.<sup>32</sup>

The fourth meeting of the Consultation on Church Union was an historic occasion because the participating Churches together had been able to reach an agreement on one of the central problems of church unity - the ministry. This was a

<sup>31</sup> Report of Commission II, "Ordination in a Church Catholic, Evangelical and Reformed," Digest of Proceedings, Vol, IV, p. 27

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-28.

significant agreement for the Episcopal Church because the concept of the historic episcopate had been accepted. Commenting on this "delicate task" of the 1965 meeting, The Christian Century stated: "The Lexington session proved that it (an agreement on the ministry) can be done without triggering deadly explosives which would blast all hope of union." <sup>33</sup> Although the question of ordained women and the nature and function of the eldership and diaconate were not discussed at this meeting, there was sufficient cause for the Consultation to believe that "in two reports which we have recorded as a consensus, we have broken fresh ground." <sup>34</sup>

On the basis of the results accomplished by the 1965 meeting, the Consultation "felt compelled to establish a commission from the delegation of our six churches, asking them to begin work on an outline plan of union which will be the main agenda of our next meeting." <sup>35</sup> "Such a draft outline," the Closing Statement of the 1965 meeting continued, "will be very far from a completed plan ready for submission to our constituent churches. Indeed, from one point of view, it will be no more than material for our next discussion." <sup>36</sup> This marked a significant step forward in the Consultation. Because the Consultation had reached a critical point in its history, a Resolution was passed by the executive

<sup>33</sup> Editorial: "COCU: What and Whence," The Christian Century, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 9, March 2, 1966, p. 259.

<sup>34</sup> Closing Statement of the 1965 meeting, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

committee which asked the observer-consultant Churches "to consider changing its status from that of observer-consultant to that of participant." <sup>37</sup> The African Methodist Episcopal Church accepted the invitation of the Consultation, thereby becoming the seventh participating Church.

Between the meeting in 1965 and the meeting to be held in Dallas, Texas, in May 1966, "a special commission consisting of one person from each participating church and chosen by that denomination's delegation to the Consultation" <sup>38</sup> has met several times to prepare an outline for a plan of union. The Committee, composed of Dr. Blake of the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., Bishop Bayne of the Episcopal Church, Bishop Ensley of the Methodist Church, Dr. Minear of the United Church of Christ, Dr. Beazley of the Disciples of Christ and Dr. Washburn of the Evangelical United Brethren Church "is confident it can present an acceptable plan of union" <sup>39</sup> for the 1966 Consultation meeting. The 105 page outline for such a plan was released by the special commission of the Consultation on Friday, April 1, 1966. The Chairman of the Consultation, Bishop Gibson, described it as "profoundly significant." <sup>40</sup> Although not generally available for

<sup>37</sup> A Resolution to the Consultation from the Executive Committee, Digest of Proceedings, Vol, IV, p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "Where We Are in Church Union Conversations," (Council on Christian Unity (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, Ind., : Fall 1965), p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Gibson, Jr., quoted from The New York Times, Saturday, April 2, 1966, p. 1.

reference at this writing, it seems likely, on the basis of the previous agreements reached by the Consultation, that this outline for a plan of union will move the seven participating Churches closer to unity.

In the meantime, Dr. William J. Wolf, a professor at the Episcopal Theological School and a member of the Episcopal Church's delegation to the Consultation, has put forward a Plan of Union which "carries no authority in the American scene other than my own suggestion" <sup>41</sup> although "it has been written with the six Churches of the Consultation in mind." <sup>42</sup> Dr. Wolf's Plan "is offered for study, discussion, criticism, and revision in the spirit of one Christian's obedience to the will of our Lord that His Church may be one in its mission of service to the world." <sup>43</sup> This approach to the question was drawn from Dr. Wolf's study paper written for the 1965 meeting of the Consultation on "The Ordained Ministry in Uniting Churches." In his Plan of Union he has "tried to bring together their (our Christian brothers in Asia, Africa, and Australia) ecumenical wisdom and experience with some adaptation to the special situation in the United States." <sup>44</sup> He explains that "most of these plans have

<sup>41</sup> William J. Wolf, A Plan of Church Union Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, (Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

secured the general approval of the world-wide representative bodies of these traditions, as, for example, the Lambeth Conference for Anglicans.<sup>45</sup> It is not possible to predict what influence Dr. Wolf's Plan of Union will have on the Consultation, but in the words of an Editorial of The Christian Century, it may serve "as a catalyst to stimulate such thought and discussion as well make COCU's Dallas meeting a success rather than a default of its primary business."<sup>46</sup>

What of the future? If a Plan of Union is accepted by the participating Churches in the Consultation, will it in turn be accepted by the plenary bodies of these Churches? No one expects the Consultation to reach such agreement in the next few years, but when and if agreement does come, will all the members of the participating Churches approve it? More specifically, will the Episcopal Church as a whole accept it? These are burning questions that cannot be simply answered. But, in the words of George L. Hunt, the Executive Secretary of the Consultation: "This movement toward union is doomed to failure from the start unless the issues central to it are studied by the ministers and members of the churches."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> William J. Wolf, A Plan of Church Union Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed, (Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> Editorial: "COCU: Whither and How," The Christian Century, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 10, March 9, 1966, p. 292.

<sup>47</sup> George L. Hunt, "These Churches are Met Together," Where We Are In Church Union (A Reflection Book, Association Press, New York: 1965), p. 20.

Except perhaps in a vague and generalized way, most Episcopal Churchmen fail to appreciate all that the Consultation has achieved or what the results of the Consultation will be if it is followed to its logical conclusion. The impact of the Consultation has not been felt on many levels of the Church. Part of the reason for the failure of the 1946 negotiations between the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches was due to a lack of communication and understanding on all levels of the Church of the real issues involved. History will be repeated unless more is done to make Episcopalian understand and discuss all the issues in debate.

The next chapter will look at some of the different attitudes that churchmen have on church union. It will suggest what in the future may be done to lead us to an intelligent and reasonable decision someday if, God willing, the Consultation achieves accord.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

In reporting the accomplishments of the 1965 Consultation meeting, Time Magazine stated: "But these gains did not allay many private fears about the merger's future."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, an Editorial in The Christian Century commented: "The consultation might have to settle for a union of three or four of the participating churches rather than of all six."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, these comments do not reflect isolated attitudes towards church union. In a very real sense, these attitudes hover constantly in the background of church union talks and of the Consultation too. While such thinking may be said to exist in all the participating Churches of the Consultation, it is especially evident in the Episcopal Church. It would not be possible to examine in detail all the reasons for this state of mind, but reference to some of these reasons will assist in our assessment of the future prospects.

Looking ahead to the future of the Consultation, The Christian Century stated:

It can safely be said that if the Consultation on Church Union eventually fails to achieve a united church which includes all six participants, the failure will have to be blamed not so much on theological or ecclesiastical as on psychological factors.<sup>3</sup>

Part of the reason for these "psychological factors" may be found within the backgrounds of the Consultation's participating Churches. Three of the Churches

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<sup>1</sup> Time Magazine, Vol. 85, No. 17, April 23, 1965, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Editorial: "COCU: What and Whence," The Christian Century, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 9, March 2, 1966, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> Editorial: "COCU: Whither and How," The Christian Century, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 10, March 9, 1966, p. 293.

(United Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, and Evangelical United Brethren Church) are themselves the products of recent mergers, and, as a result, "have experienced both the difficulties and the rewards of intra - and interconfessional mergers."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Methodist and Episcopal Churches have not had the benefits of such an experience.

Another "psychological factor" that must be mentioned is "vested interest" - the property and financial holdings of the Church. Many people do not like the idea that church union also means the eventual sharing of their Church's financial interests. In a formal debate on church union, the problem of "vested interest" would not, in all probability, be the decisive factor in not accepting union, but undoubtedly it would be one of the underlying and unstated reasons for such a negative response. The question of "vested interest" prevented the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches from achieving union in Nigeria in December 1965. This particular union scheme has been postponed until the matter can be settled in the courts. One danger in the discussion of "vested interest" is that some people will cover their true concern about it with theological or ecclesiastical arguments to support their rejection of a Plan of Union.

It is also a fact that many people are of the opinion that the time is not right for church union. Part of this reasoning can be explained by the state of

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<sup>4</sup> Editorial: "COCU: Whither and How," The Christian Century, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 10, March 9, 1966, p. 291.

prosperity that American Christianity presently enjoys. Financially and numerically, the Churches in America never have been in a better position and one result is a certain degree of apathy among them. The creation of a united church will require a great deal of effort, and many people are not yet convinced that it is worth all the energy required.

Plans of union have been either put into use or are close to being accepted in countries where the Church has not had the financial or numerical resources that are presently available to the Churches in America. These poorer or weaker Churches felt that together their witness would be more effective to a largely non-Christian population. They considered church union as a means of survival. The richer and stronger American churches are not readily susceptible to such arguments. However, there are some who believe that the present state of prosperity may be short-lived and consider that it is good sense to work for church union now rather than wait until it becomes a necessity.

Within the Episcopal Church, there is a group which believes that the Church should not be considering union with other Protestants because of the effect that it might have on its relationships with Rome and the East. Such an attitude is reflected in a letter to the Editor of The Episcopalian written in reaction to an interchurch article by George L. Hunt entitled: "Why Church Union?" The letter states:

I feel that the proposed "union" is hardly beneficial to our relationship with the two other principal branches of this historic Catholic Church, and I feel that we might better concentrate our efforts on improving our relations with Rome and Constantinople, before involving ourselves in a "union" with the Protestant sects.

. . . Mr. Hunt's article . . . refers to a "Church truly catholic, truly evangelical and reformed." The Episcopal Church is already all three. Why not invite the sects to become Episcopalian and become truly Catholic, truly Evangelical and truly Reformed? <sup>5</sup>

In view of the accomplishments and the spirit of the Consultation, a letter of this kind represents a rather narrow state of mind in that it suggests the isolation of the Episcopal Church.

The American Church Union has also tried to isolate the Episcopal Church from the rest of the Protestant Churches. It frequently has stated its opposition to the Consultation on Church Union. Throughout the history of the Consultation, from the Blake Proposal in 1960 (see Chapter Three) up to the 1965 meeting, the A. C. U. has found little that is worthy of favorable comment. In noting the agreements reached by the 1965 Consultation meeting, The American Church News, the magazine of the A. C. U., ended its article with the following editor's comment:

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<sup>5</sup> James R. Hunt, Letter to the Editor, The Episcopalian, Vol. 131, No. 4, April 1966, p. 4.

The similarity of the plan (for holding a service uniting the various ministerial traditions) to that in South India, which was rejected by the Episcopal Church in its General Convention in Miami six years ago (1958), apparently did not act as a deterrent.<sup>6</sup>

The American Church Union opposes the Consultation because it believes that by accepting a Plan of Union (if one emerges from the Consultation), the Episcopal Church would cease to be a part of the Anglican Communion; the Book of Common Prayer would be sacrificed; and the meaning of the historic episcopate would be compromised. However, the General Convention is keenly aware of the Episcopal Church's part in the Anglican Communion and would not approve any Plan of Union without the prior consent of the Lambeth Conference. In regard to the Prayer Book, the Consultation has not yet reached definite agreement on many of the details of a united church. Such an achievement will take many more meetings of the Consultation. It has, however, agreed that "the living Tradition of the church implies certain basic elements of Christian worship but does not confine worship to a single plan or form."<sup>7</sup> Thus, the liturgy of the Episcopal Church would not be sacrificed in a united church.

On the issue of the historic episcopate, the Episcopal Church has not officially responded to the agreement reached on it by the 1965 meeting of the

<sup>6</sup> Editor's Note at the end of an article on the 1965 meeting of the Consultation, The American Church News, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, May 1965, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Report on "Worship and Witness of the Church," Digest of Proceedings, Vols. I and II combined, p. 47.

Consultation, but the Rev. Dr. Reginald H. Fuller has prepared a Report on this subject for the Ecumenical Committee of the Diocese of Chicago. This Report was included in the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee on Ecumenical Relations held in June 1965. In his critique of the 1965 Consultation meeting, Dr. Fuller stated:

Episcopalian can only welcome the report's decisive acceptance of the episcopate for the united church. Inevitably the question will arise - especially when the nature of the proposed integrating service is made clear - precisely what doctrinal understanding of the episcopate is involved.

We are all aware, of course, that there are in the Anglican communion different views. The historic episcopate is variously understood as of the esse, plene esse and bene esse of the church . . .

I believe the whole discussion about esse, plene esse and bene esse can be cut through if we distinguish between the historic episcopate on the one hand and episcope (sheperding, oversight, guardianship of the flock) on the other. Episcope is one of the three fold aspects of Christ's ministry in his church . . . . As such, episcope is of the esse of the church since Christ is of the esse of the church. The historic episcopate, however, is the form in which episcope emerged in the second century . . . . They were together the means by which the post-apostolic church sought to remain apostolic . . . . Such continuity is essential to the fullness of the Church. Therefore, we may claim that the historic episcopate, as one of the effective signs of continuity with the apostles, is of the esse of the fullness of the Church . . . . All churches in these conversations, in my opinion, have some element of episcope.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, "A Report on the Consultation on Church Union" (prepared for the Ecumenical Committee of the Diocese of Chicago) quoted from the Minutes of the June 22-24, 1965 meeting of the Joint Commission on Ecumenical Relations, pp. 2-3.

The Consultation's 1965 meeting agreed that "the historic episcopate commends itself as personifying the continuity of churchly authority."<sup>9</sup> This is Dr. Fuller's understanding of the historic episcopate as reflected in his Report.

Although the American Church Union represents a small minority in the Episcopal Church, it still is a part of the Church. The work of the Consultation can not go uncriticized. For this purpose, the A.C.U. has served a useful function. The Consultation is aware of the various traditions that are represented in the participating Churches and of the different traditions within each of these Churches. The "Open Letter on Church Unity," which is the introduction to the outline of a plan of union to be presented to the 1966 meeting of the Consultation, states: "We can be slaves to the past because we cannot bear the unsettling of our foundations, or we can become pioneers on the frontier because this is where God calls us to be."<sup>10</sup>

In the 1946 negotiations of union between the Presbyterian and Episcopal Churches, the arguments both for and against union tended to follow the lines of churchmanship. Generally speaking, the so-called liberals or low churchmen were in favor of the union, while the so-called Anglo-Catholics or high churchmen were against it. The arguments both for and against union became more and more

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<sup>9</sup> Report of Commission I, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> "Open Letter on Church Unity" by the Special Commission appointed by the Consultation on Church Union to write an Outline for a Plan of Union, quoted from The New York Times, Saturday, April 2, 1966, p. 14.

emotional until it became evident that there was disunity within the Episcopal Church itself. Another cause for the failure of the 1946 negotiations was the fact that the Proposed Plan of Union was issued eight weeks before the General Convention. This left very little time for a reasonable exchange of opinions.

Fortunately, time is on the side of the Consultation. It readily acknowledges that church union will take a number of meetings and discussions before union becomes a fact. Thus, there are many opportunities to discuss reasonably the issues that are being raised by the Consultation. The right decision on church unity can only be made if such discussions take place on all levels of the Church. The arguments both pro and con must be carefully considered in such discussions.

The Consultation has reached a point where it seems possible that an acceptable Plan of Union will emerge from it. Yet, most churchmen are aware only vaguely of its progress. Many people who are not now in favor of union know little about the work of the Consultation. Much of the prejudice against the work of this body would be erased if all levels of the Church made greater efforts to inform themselves and thus be prepared to consider intelligently the important issues that are involved. It is claimed by some that the Episcopal Church's membership is no better informed about these issues than the people of any of the other six Churches. Those who hold this view argue that if the Episcopal Church becomes better informed and grows enthusiastic about the prospects of union, it will suffer disappointment when the Consultation fails to attain its goal. If that were the attitude of all the participating Churches, then the Consultation has failed

already! It would be far better for the Church to reject a Plan of Union after careful consideration than to accept it with no discussion.

Dissemination of information on all levels of the Church is essential if there is to be an intelligent response when the time comes for a decision on church union. The next section of this chapter will consider the quality and extent of such efforts by the Episcopal Church. It will suggest also how those efforts may be strengthened and extended to become more effective.

In considering the future role of the Episcopal Church in informing all parts of the Church of the issues involved in church union, this section of Chapter Five will follow (in order) the seven Resolutions passed by the Consultation at its 1965 meeting.

- 1) The Consultation requests our national plenary bodies, their officers, boards and agencies to endorse Where We Are In Church Union and promote the widespread use of the book edited by George L. Hunt and Paul A. Crow, Jr. (50 cents) - already distributed to more than 33,000 pastors in our denominations - in local churches and among congregations of our six churches, meeting together for discussion wherever possible.<sup>11</sup>

The book, Where We Are In Church Union, was distributed a year ago. It did not stimulate the church-wide discussions that were hoped for by the Consultation. Nevertheless, this book has some merit. It would have had greater success

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<sup>11</sup>Resolution on Interpretation, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 34.

if the clergy on local levels had promoted its use. Another publication is the "Miniature Book" by Forward Movement. This contains all the Reports and Resolutions of the four meetings of the Consultation. The Foreword of the book entitled: COCU: The Reports of the Four Meetings gives the following reason for issuing it:

We feel that we cannot now turn back from the road to unity, but must press with all our power to have the millions of our fellow-churchmen know and share this same experience. To that end we hope to have a plan ready for widespread discussion before the decade of the sixties ends. First drafts are on the drawing board. For your background when these discussions come, here are the results of our first four years of study, thinking, praying and discussing together. <sup>12</sup>

The National Council of Churches is not directly associated with the Consultation, but in the interest of broadening ecumenical activities, it has published Living Room Dialogues - A Guide for Lay Discussion Catholic - Orthodox - Protestant. This book, as the title implies, is meant to stimulate discussion by laymen of different traditions in their own homes; away from church buildings and influence. The purpose of these dialogues is "to help individual laymen and women to become concerned personally about Christian unity and to pray for the reunion of all Christians." <sup>13</sup> The first two sessions of dialogue discuss "What is Christian

<sup>12</sup> COCU: The Reports of the Four Meetings (Forward Movement Miniature Book, Forward Movement Publications, Cincinnati: 1966), p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Living Room Dialogues, ed. by W. G. Greenspun and W. Norgren (National Council of the Churches and Paulist Press: 1965), p. 7.

Dialogue?" Too few laymen ever had real discussions with laymen of other Churches on the key issues that unite or divide them, and in beginning this way, Living Room Dialogues meets the people where they are. There are a total of seven dialogues dealing with such subjects as: Worship, the Lord's Supper, Church tradition and authority and the Bible. Each of the dialogues contains: Prayers, Bible Readings, Responses, Articles on the subjects under discussion and Questions dealing with the issues that have been raised by the articles.

With all these materials, fruitful discussions on the Consultation are possible, and yet, they have not taken place on a widespread basis. But, the two books, Where We Are In Church Union and COCU: The Reports of the Four Meetings, should not be recommended for laymen who have not previously experienced Christian dialogue. A more profitable way to begin such discussions would be to use Living Room Dialogues first and when the participants have had some experience, the discussion could then focus on the issues of the Consultation.

The problem, however, is not how the discussions should proceed, but how they shall be implemented. In 1964, Peter Day was appointed Ecumenical Officer of the Episcopal Church to better co-ordinate the increasing ecumenical activities of the Church with the local level. As a further move, Carroll Greene, Jr. was appointed Mr. Day's assistant in June 1965. Then, as a means to create better channels of communication in the Church, Mr. Day, in the Summer of 1965, asked all the dioceses of the Episcopal Church to appoint ecumenical officers. The first meeting of these diocesan ecumenical officers will be held in April 1966. They

will then discuss the Consultation on Church Union and how the whole Church can involve itself more in the work of the Consultation.

The appointment of diocesan ecumenical officers should improve the channels of communication and may stimulate more local activity. However, a further line of communication is necessary if these local discussions are to take place. One solution might be the appointment of parish ecumenical officers. A key layman (vestryman?) in this capacity could be responsible for organizing local discussion groups and for circulating necessary information to the diocesan and local levels. In appointing laymen in every parish to this position, the laity and the clergy alike would share in the responsibility for involvement of all parts of the Church in the Consultation.

In Canada, the Anglican Church and the United Church are seeking organic union. The progress of these negotiations exceeds that of the Consultation. One obvious reason is that church-wide discussions are taking place and the members of the Church are well-informed. The discussions have been successful because the bishop of each diocese has made success his personal responsibility. Such an example might indicate that a bishop in the Episcopal Church should assume a similar responsibility to insure that a wise decision on church union is made by a well-informed Church.

- 2) The Consultation urges the development of Christian education curriculum or program units on the concerns of Church union to be planned jointly by the appropriate editors of the six churches and included in their publishing programs at the first opportunity, published simultaneously, if that is possible.<sup>14</sup>

The present Sunday School curriculum of the Episcopal Church has no reference to the Consultation on Church Union. Indeed, the curriculum refers to the ecumenical movement in only a few instances. Commenting on this lack of ecumenical references in the curriculum, Mrs. David R. Hunter, the Director of the Department of Christian Education has stated: "They are very inadequate and are not in any real sense, a response to the contemporary challenge of the ecumenical movement."<sup>15</sup> One of the reasons why the curriculum does not include any reference to the Consultation is because the Consultation has been in existence for only four years and, before any new material can be put into the curriculum, it must first be tested on a trial basis and, if necessary, revised. Also, there appears to be a lack of interest in the Consultation on the part of some of the members in the Department of Christian Education. This attitude was evident in the Department's December 1965 meeting, the purpose of which was "to discover the issues in the work of COCU for us as Christian Education Officers, so that we can prepare

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<sup>14</sup> Resolution on Interpretation, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Carman St. John Hunter, Director of the Department of Christian Education, quoted from a letter sent to this writer on March 31, 1966, p. 1.

ourselves to develop programs for the Church re: UNION." <sup>16</sup> No specific programs were planned and much of the conference was spent trying to uncover the reasons for the "low interest in COCU," <sup>17</sup> and how "we adequately deal with the personal threats to loss of jobs, status, memberships and so forth." <sup>18</sup> The closing remarks of the meeting suggested that "we ought to do what we can where we are; we ought to work with other denominations within COCU and with others, too, on projects currently scheduled or being planned." <sup>19</sup>

The Department of Christian Education is looking to the future but, according to its Director, Mrs. Hunter, it is "at the parking stage with the . . . Churches in the Consultation on Church Union. The Education Boards of all of these churches have appointed members to a special committee on parish education . . . . Most of us are saying that we would hope to have common materials within the next ten to fifteen years." <sup>20</sup> Obviously, the Department of Christian Education is looking far ahead, but what of the immediate future? There is a need to discuss church union in the Sunday School curriculum now, as well as to plan for the time when union may become a fact.

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<sup>16</sup> Minutes of the December 20-22, 1965, meeting of the Department of Christian Education, (Mimeographed), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Carman St. John Hunter, quoted from the same source as footnote 15, p. 1.

Informing the laity on the Consultation includes children, too. It would stimulate discussion if a part of the Sunday school curriculum examined in simple language what church union means in the future of the Episcopal Church. A study of what each of the participating Churches of the Consultation has to offer to a united church would be useful to them. Most Sunday school children have friends who are members of other Churches and it is normal for them to be curious about various faiths. It would not be difficult to interest them in the subject of unity. Children are natural ecumenists. Involvement of them in the Consultation has an importance beyond their years.

Of course, Christian Education is not confined to Sunday schools. It also includes youth and adult education. The adult Christian Education staff officers of the six participating Churches in the Consultation have held regular meetings since 1962 when the Consultation first began. In limited areas, programs of adult education have been initiated on a trial basis with some success. Such study units as The Meaning of the Quadrilateral and Ecumenical Encounters in Christian Unity (Seabury Press) by Charles D. Kean were published in 1963. However, these materials have met only with partial success because of a lack of interest and ability to implement such study courses. (Other suggestions for improving adult education may be found in Section I of this Chapter.)

In the area of youth work, the Episcopal Church and the other participating Churches in the Consultation met in February 1966 to undertake the following five tasks:

- 1) To try to develop a common platform of goals and purposes for youth ministry.
- 2) To make an inventory of resources for youth ministry currently being developed and used by the Churches involved and to recommend ways in which we can share in the development of resources for each other so that we might free budget and staff for number 3.
- 3) To develop, support and evaluate projects out of which new forms of youth ministry may emerge.
- 4) To recommend to denominational authorities a structure to facilitate implementation of our common goals.
- 5) To involve local youth ministry persons in selected urban areas of the seven churches in the exploration of strategy for an ecumenical youth ministry.<sup>21</sup>

These proposals have not been given any time schedule, but if specific programs have been arranged to take place during the next few years, it is hoped that by then youth will be better informed. The Youth Staff of the Disciples of Christ have proposed already a national assembly which would involve the youth of the participating Churches in the Consultation. This assembly has been proposed because "we should not any longer seek to use national gatherings to build denominational loyalty, but should always seek to involve our youth, nationally, in experiencing the ecumenical church as deemed desirable and possible at the moment of the assembly."<sup>22</sup> The date for the assembly is set for the Summer

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<sup>21</sup>A Proposal from a Consultation of Representatives of the Youth Ministry Staffs of the COCU Churches, February, 1966, (Mimeographed), pp. 2-3.

<sup>22</sup>A Proposal from the Joint Youth Staffs of the Disciples of Christ, (No date) (Mimeographed), p. 1.

of 1970 and would involve about three thousand youth representing all parts of the country. The program would "deal with the issues which are involved in the Conversations on Church Union, especially as these are developed and defined in the years between now and the youth assembly."<sup>23</sup>

- 3) The Consultation urges our church magazines to prepare jointly and to publish a series of interpretative articles about church union.<sup>24</sup>

To date, articles by George L. Hunt, the Executive Secretary of the Consultation, and Stephen F. Bayne, Jr., a member of the Episcopal Church's delegation to the Consultation, have appeared in The Episcopalian (February 1966 and April 1966 respectively). They have been helpful in communicating the work of the Consultation and have attempted to erase many of the prejudices that people hold about church union.

- 4) The Consultation asks the appropriate program agencies of our churches, such as boards and commissions on ecumenical affairs, departments of women's work and men's work, offices of field service, etc., to consider how they can interpret church union through their channels to the congregations.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>A Proposal from the Joint Youth Staffs of the Disciples of Christ, (No date) (Mimeographed), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Resolution on Interpretation, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

(Comments applying to this fourth section have been made in sections I and II of the Consultation's Resolutions.)

5) The Consultation asks our theological seminaries and other church-related agencies for higher education to include the concerns of church union in their curricula and programs.<sup>26</sup>

In 1949, the General Convention made a similar request of the seminaries, hoping to create better understanding between the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches.<sup>27</sup> In 1952, the Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity reported to the General Convention that there had "been occasional interchanges of lectures and students on the seminary level, but the Commission has had reported to it very few instances of other joint meetings."<sup>28</sup> In spite of the Consultation's progress and recommendation for more activity, many of the Episcopal seminaries have not initiated any more programs of ecumenical interest than the occasional exchange of lecturers, preachers, and students. Several of the seminaries offer joint seminars with other theological schools and this is a positive step in the right direction. Is this enough? An increase in ecumenical programs and courses is needed. One such program has been proposed by the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The 1967 meeting of the Consultation will be

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<sup>26</sup> Resolution on Interpretation, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1949), printed for the Convention in 1949, p. 659.

<sup>28</sup> Journal of the General Convention (1952), printed for the Convention in 1952, p. 662.

held at the Episcopal Theological School . The following Fall, as part of its Centennial Celebration, the Episcopal Theological School is planning to hold "A Seminary Consultation on Church Union" which "would respond to whatever documents C.O.C.U. produced at the May 1967 meeting." <sup>29</sup> The participants will include representatives from the Churches in the Consultation on both the student and faculty level. Surely, however, more radical steps are necessary if the seminaries of the Episcopal Church are to become completely involved in the work of the Consultation.

During his three years in an Episcopal seminary, a student spends part of the week (usually Sunday) working in a local parish. The responsibility of the student varies from situation to situation but usually, under the supervision of a clergyman, he is responsible for youth work, some parish calling, conducting worship and teaching Sunday School classes. In most cases, the student spends his three years of field work in an Episcopal parish and has little contact with the churches of other denominations. One way in which theological students might become more involved in the other Churches participating in the Consultation would be to spend one of the three years doing field work, under proper supervision, in a Church other than an Episcopal. Probably, the second or third year of a student's training would be the best time for him to participate in such a program.

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<sup>29</sup>A Proposal for the October Centennial Event of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass. (William J. Wolf), (Mimeographed), February 21, 1966.

In areas such as Africa and Asia, Joint Theological Schools are in operation. In such ventures, the students of each denomination live in separate "colleges," but take their basic courses (theology, Old and New Testament and church history) together and hold a common worship service once a day. Naturally, with each entering class, there are latent prejudices against the other denominations. In time, however, excellent relationships of "creative tension" are established. Each student becomes aware of the similarities and differences of the other's faith. Thus is created the right atmosphere for stimulating ecumenical dialogue.<sup>30</sup>

Often the Episcopal Church's theological schools are too isolated from those of the other churches. An increase in ecumenical programs would not entirely resolve this situation. From a realistic point of view, it is improbable that the Episcopal Church, as a whole, would approve a joint theological school unless there were a definite commitment for church union. Looking at the practical side, however, the combining of material and faculty resources would make the seminaries considerably stronger and greater than they are at the present. Further, the establishment of joint theological schools would give a tremendous impetus to the Consultation on Church Union and to the ecumenical movement in general.

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<sup>30</sup>This information on joint theological schools came from the Rev. Canon Sverre Holth, Visiting Professor in the Mission and Unity of the Church, The Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass. Canon Holth's past experience has included a teaching position in Trinity Theological College in Singapore which is a joint theological school.

- 6) The Consultation urges the widespread observance of Sunday, April 24, 1966, as the occasion to encourage joint study groups, prayer for church union and the widespread invitation of pulpit guests across denominational lines asking the national plenary bodies to endorse such an observance and program.<sup>31</sup>

In support of the recommendation by the Consultation, the Episcopal Church has issued a leaflet to all the clergy of the Church encouraging them to implement these activities. However, the leaflet only contains superficial suggestions for anything more than a day of pulpit exchange. Some clergy of the Episcopal Church believe that a simple pulpit exchange is all that is necessary to be involved in the work of the Consultation. Surely, however, pulpit exchanges are only a beginning to the creation of an interest and concern in the Consultation. Unless they are followed through with more concrete action, little will have been gained.

- 7) The Consultation requests the chairmen of our delegations to approach the chief executive officers of their denominations, or other appropriate officials, to convey the above requests at the first opportunity to the agencies involved and to urge their implementation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Resolution on Interpretation, Digest of Proceedings, Vol. IV, pp. 34-35.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

It is clear that the Episcopal Church acknowledges that the entire Church must be involved in the work of the Consultation. It is equally evident that the Church has only just begun its work towards that objective. A United Church may become a reality. If a Plan of Union emerges from the Consultation, all members of the Episcopal Church must be united in their ability to make a well-informed decision on whether to accept or reject it. That kind of decision can not be made unless all levels of the Church become involved in the work of the Consultation on Church Union. Such involvement requires discussion, study, worship, and, above all, an open mind.

## CONCLUSION

These pages have examined the Episcopal Church and the Consultation on Church Union. We began by considering the men of the last century who were responsible for creating the ecumenical atmosphere that partly made it possible for the Episcopal Church to participate in the Consultation. We then examined the ecumenical activities of the Church from the beginning of this century to 1960 and saw clearly that the Church was not ready for organic union. Our consideration then turned to the work of the Consultation itself over these past four years. Finally, we asked: "What of the future?" That question still remains unanswered. The future of the Consultation is not predictable, but, past accomplishments suggest that eventually a Plan of Union may emerge from it. The reaction of the Episcopal Church to such a Plan is likely to be negative, uncertain or confused unless, in the meantime, all the people of the Church become involved and informed and aware of the vision of their Church as a part of a United Church, truly catholic, truly reformed, and truly evangelical.

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